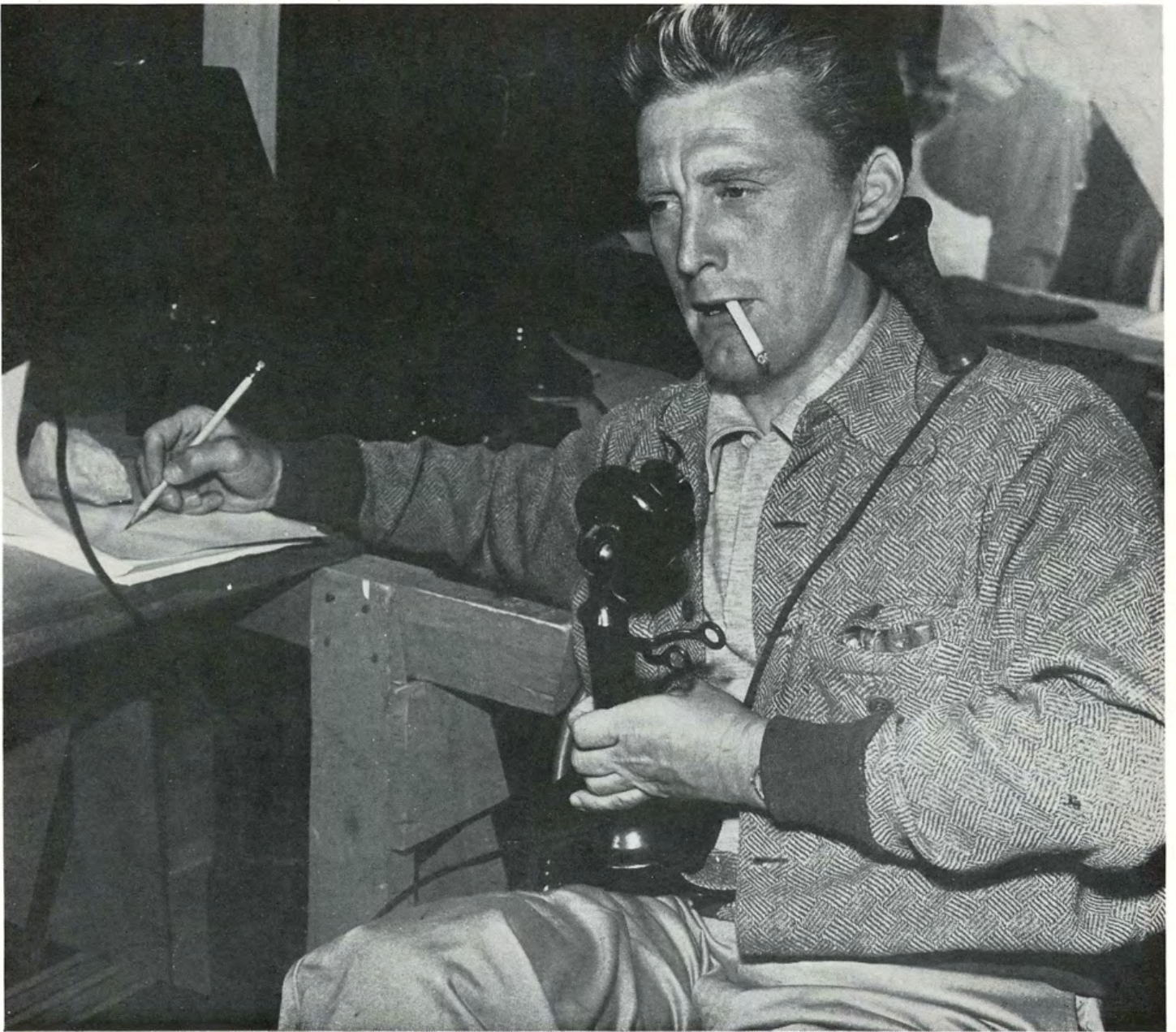


Sight & Sound

The Film Monthly

April

1/6



CASE HISTORY OF A MOVIE
by Dore Schary

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SIGHT AND SOUND'S GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Brief Pointers to the principal films showing in British cinemas during April. Last-minute changes of programme after our press-date may cause one or two inaccuracies (chiefly in the London area) but we hope this list may serve as a useful general guide. Films with an asterisk are particularly recommended.

ADVENTURERS, The (G.F.D.). South African story of search for hidden diamonds: confused adventure. (Dennis Price, Jack Hawkins, Siobhan McKenna: director, David MacDonald.)

AMOUREUX SONT SEULS AU MONDE, Les (Studio One). Middle-aged composer's marriage threatened by pretty young pianist: stylish novelette. (Louis Jouvet: director, Henri Decoin.)

AS OTHERS SEE US (LES CASSE-PIEDS) (Blue Ribbon). Extended Benchley-style film lecture, anatomising bores. Fair. (With and by Noel-Noel.)

BREAKING POINT, The (Warners). New version of Hemingway's "To Have and Have Not", about a boat-owner's struggle to earn an honest living and maintain his self-respect. Too slick and artificial in style, but redeemed by John Garfield's fine performance. (Phyllis Thaxter, Patricia Neal: director, Michael Curtiz.)

BROWNING VERSION, The (G.F.D.). Conscientious adaptation of Rattigan's study of a derelict schoolmaster, with an improbable near-happy ending: sentiment with dignity. (Michael Redgrave, Jean Kent, Nigel Patrick: director, Anthony Asquith.)

CESAR (G.C.T.). With this, the third part of Pagnol's robust, loquacious trilogy of Marseilles life, the adventures of *Marius* and *Fanny* conclude in marriage. (Raimu, Fresnay, Orane Demazis: director, Marcel Pagnol, 1934.)

CLOCHEMERLE (United Artists). Energetic but rather indifferent French comedy of village life. (Felix Oudart, Brochard: director, Pierre Chenal.)

DARK CITY (Paramount). Jaded thriller, with sub-Chandler atmosphere, about a gambler who reforms. (Charlton Heston, Viveca Lindfors, Elizabeth Scott: director, William Dieterle.)

***DOMENICA D'AGOSTO (Film Traders).** The lives of rich and poor contrasted and entwined one afternoon on a Roman pleasure beach: a little too slight, but fresh, gay and lively. (Anna Baldini, Franco Interlenghi: director, Luciano Emmer.)

FATHER'S LITTLE DIVIDEND (M.G.M.). Tepid sequel to *Father of the Bride* (Spencer Tracy, Joan Bennett: director, Vincente Minnelli).

FLESH AND BLOOD (British Lion). Screen version of Bridie's study of the effects of heredity, *The Sleeping Clergyman*: jerkily episodic, corpse-ridden. (Richard Todd, Glynis Johns, Joan Greenwood: director, Anthony Kimmins.)

***FOURTEEN HOURS (Fox).** A young man contemplates suicide from the top window ledge of a New York hotel for this period of time: crowds gather to watch, family and friends plead with him. Some tense scenes, fine acting, but a cheated ending. (Richard Basehart, Barbara Bel Geddes, Paul Douglas, Agnes Moorehead: director, Henry Hathaway.)

GIOVENTU PERDUTA (LOST YOUTH) (Archway). Interesting, sympathetic Italian film about post-war youth and its problems. (Massimo Girotti, Carla del Poggio: director, Pietro Germi.)

GREAT MISSOURI RAID, The (Paramount). Western concerning the adventures of outlaws Frank and Jesse James, and the Younger brothers. Strictly routine. (Wendell Corey, Macdonald Carey, Ward Bond: director, Gordon Douglas.)

I'LL GET YOU FOR THIS (Independent British Lion). Melodrama for George Raft on the Italian Riviera: James Hadley Chase gamblers and crooks. (Coleen Gray, Enzo Staiola: director, Joseph H. Newman.)

KIM (M.G.M.). Deviationist version of Kipling, with lavishly authentic Technicolor backgrounds and too little adventure. (Dean Stockwell, Errol Flynn: director, Victor Saville.)

LEMON DROP KID (Paramount). Medium Bob Hope comedy, based on a Damon Runyon story. (Marilyn Maxwell: director, Sidney Lanfield.)

LIGHTS OUT (G.F.D.). A vulgar cash-in on the racial and rehabilitation cycles: blinded veteran readjusts, learns to love negroes, finds girl, etc. (Arthur Kennedy: director, Mark Robson.)

LONG DARK HALL, The (British Lion). Rather dimly contrived drama about a philandering husband unjustly accused of murder. (Rex Harrison, Lilli Palmer: directors, Reginald Beck, Anthony Bushell.)

MAD WEDNESDAY (R.K.O.). Erratic, sometimes very amusing, Preston Sturges comedy that marks the return of Harold Lloyd.

MATING SEASON, The (Paramount). Thelma Ritter, the proprietress of a hamburger stand, saves her son's marriage to an ambassador's daughter: average comedy. (John Lund, Gene Tierney: director, Mitchell Leisen.)

MR. DRAKE'S DUCK (Eros). Comedy about a duck that lays a uranium egg. One or two good moments, more *longueurs*. (Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Yolande Donlan: director, Val Guest.)

NAKED HEART, The (British Lion). Protracted and chilly love story set in a snowy Canadian town: difficult to take seriously. (Michele Morgan, Kieron Moore, Francoise Rosay: director, Marc Allegret.)

OUR VERY OWN (R.K.O.). Adored eldest daughter in a small-town family discovers herself to be adopted and reacts with horror. Goldwyn's slick and rather frightening tribute to the blessings of motherhood, the family, and the American way of life. (Ann Blyth, Farley Granger, Joan Evans: director, David Miller.)

POOL OF LONDON (G.F.D.). Melodrama with effective London locations, a good performance by Earl Cameron as a Jamaican in love with an English girl, but a disappointingly timid approach to the problems raised. (Susan Shaw, Bonar Colleano: director, Basil Dearden.)

RAWHIDE (Fox). Western about a young couple imprisoned and threatened by outlaws in a lonely mail-coach stopping place: starts slowly, but works up a good deal of tension. (Tyrone Power, Susan Hayward, Hugh Marlowe: director, Henry Hathaway.)

***RIO GRANDE (Republic).** New John Ford western, unequal, but with many fine passages. (John Wayne, Maureen O'Hara.)

***STORM WARNING (Warners).** Exciting, very well written story exposing Ku Klux Klan in a Southern town. (Ginger Rogers, Doris Day, Ronald Reagan: director, Stuart Heisler.)

TEA FOR TWO (Warners). The charming Doris Day, a talented new dancer, Gene Nelson, and tentative 20's flashbacks in a generally average musical. (Gordon MacRae: director, David Butler.)

13th LETTER, The (Fox). American version of Clouzot's *Le Corbeau*, about a poison-pen outbreak in a provincial town: the original has been copied with care, but the result is greatly inferior. (Charles Boyer, Linda Darnell, Constance Smith: director, Otto Preminger.)

THIS IS MY AFFAIR (Fox). Magazine-type story about the schemes, ruthlessness and final regeneration of an ambitious, glamorous dress designer. (Susan Hayward, Dan Dailey: director, Michael Gordon.)

TOMORROW IS TOO LATE (Films de France). A plea for sexual enlightenment of young adolescents, dramatised in a school romance twisted into tragedy by elders and should-be betters. An ineptly contrived Franco-Italian film, relieved by the natural performances of the young people. (Pier Angeli, Vittorio de Sica, Gabrielle Dorziat: director, Leonide Moguy.)

TRAVELLERS JOY (G.F.D.). Mildly amusing, rather dated comedy of British tourists in currency difficulties abroad. (Googie Withers, John McCallum: director, Ralph Thomas.)

VENGEANCE VALLEY (M.G.M.). Rivalry between good and bad brothers on western ranch: slightly better than average Technicolor western. (Burt Lancaster, Robert Walker, Joanne Dru: director, Richard Thorpe.)

***WALK IN THE SUN, A (Eros).** Made in 1945, a kind of sequel to *All Quiet on the Western Front*, this is an account of a group of American soldiers on an Italian beach-head, and a masterpiece. (Dana Andrews, Richard Conte, Lloyd Bridges, John Ireland: director, Lewis Milestone.)

WEDDING BELLS (M.G.M.). Strange adventures of an American theatrical company in London during the royal wedding: a disappointing musical cheered by some wild interpretations of English life and a couple of Astaire dances. (Jane Powell, Sarah Churchill: director, Stanley Donen.)

Movie Crazy

IN A HASTILY converted church in Paris last month I saw the latest Marx Brothers film, *Love Happy*, banned over here by the trade because Ben Hecht participated in the script. As the trade papers say, it fails to please: but I found it memorable if only for its determined oddness. One guesses at some sort of private vendetta, mistily in progress while the film was shot; a bitterness between the brothers—the sourness of veteran comedians, now too old to care about teamwork, who have ceased long since to find each other very funny. Each vigorously takes an isolationist line. Never until halfway through the last reel does Groucho appear within the same frame as the other two: he sits cagily behind a desk, wearing a deerstalker, and intervenes every ten minutes or so with a few brusque sentences of commentary on the action. He looks tired and balding: the eyes roll and the feet prowl casually, almost mechanically. Chico, alone in a corner, pokes idly at a piano and ventures some desperate dialect jokes. The hero is Harpo, insensate and wholly at large—but then Harpo, the credits insist, wrote the story.

The plot, which could be (and probably was) written in capitals on the back of a membership card to the Screenwriters' Club, has to do with the theft of the Romanoff diamonds, and the efforts of a strikingly inept bunch of thugs (headed by Ilona Massey and Melville Cooper) to reclaim them—mostly from Harpo, into whose hands they continue to fall. Its climax is reached in a cleverly stunted chase across the neon signs of Manhattan Island: the ingenuity of this sequence is such that it seems churlish to reflect that cartoons can do this sort of thing so much better.

Now that *Cinderella*, that glistening sugar-stick, has left the West End, most of those who took a bite will admit that all the way through was printed the word "Kitsch". It was one big soft-centre; one missed the pleasure of closing one's teeth on something crisp, strange and unexpected. The animals are stale and derivative—Gus-Gus a drunken, hiccupping Mickey, the cat a bloated Cleo crossed with Charles Laughton. I should say that the cartoon field at the moment lies in the hands of M.G.M., with severe competition from Warner's Tweetie and Bugs Bunny.

M.G.M.'s Tom and Jerry, the battered cat matched with the screaming, balletic mouse, have leapt into the lead. In these shorts no hold is barred, and brutality is carried to extremes of intensity which Disney never envisaged. It was Jerry, remember, who drove that historic golf ball which zoomed for a mile or more before broaching the smiling teeth of Tom. In this savage neighbourhood, eyes drop out and bounce like billiard balls; electrocution is a welcome fate and a mere steamroller a boon; the flat, garish countryside bristles with those fine red firecrackers which Jerry is forever thrusting into the hands of Tom. Seconds elapse. . . then—POWWW! and the undeterred, albeit charred pussy takes up the chase, minus several whiskers and half a skull.

Apart from the breakneck Tom and Jerry saga, M.G.M. have broken new ground with a group of sheerly loony cartoons, not expertly drawn but full of invention and callous wit, of which *The Littlest Pygmy* is a good example. In this one a small canine person (with a voice like Burgess Meredith's) accompanies a large, dumb canine person (with a voice like



While we await the Marx Brothers, another famous comedian, Harold Lloyd, returns this month in "Mad Wednesday", directed and written by Preston Sturges.

Fred Allen's Socrates Mulligan), in search of the smallest pygmy in Africa: it incorporated a deathless moment in which a startled kangaroo leapt into its own pouch and vanished.

Warner's and M.G.M. lack much, particularly the grace and softness of the early Silly Symphonies. They are strictly city boys, and you are not to take too seriously the rough rural backgrounds before which they operate. They are slick and crack wise; most of the first series of Bugs Bunny cartoons were scripted by S. J. Perelman, who does not believe in fairies. To these cute dynamos *Mother Goose Goes Hollywood* would represent the height of Disney's achievement—in his prime he never produced anything as bizarre and disturbing as *The Cat that Hated People*—and whether they are right or wrong they are influencing pre-adolescent taste to an extent to which he never did. Heck Allen and Fred Quimby, responsible for most of the M.G.M. output, mean more to my precocious eight-year-old nephew than the creator of Snow White.

Terrytoons have recently put out a new character, "Mighty Mouse", based on "Superman". Here is one of the few failures of the new school: because one of the oldest cartoon conventions is that nothing ever kills anyone, not even earthquakes or being tossed into the Hudson river with your feet plunged in concrete; and Mighty Mouse has but one distinguishable characteristic—he is unkillable. It makes him very unimpressive.

I await, as we all do, the appearance of *Ragtime Bear* and *Mister Magoo* from Columbia, to demonstrate that there can be such a thing as a cartoon series for adults.

* * *

*I can't bear films in sepia,
Except about once every leap-year:
And about those in Cinecolor
I'm even cynicaller.*

(First of a series of monthly columns)

KEN TYNAN



The Film: *The Man in the White Suit* (Cecil Parker, Alec Guinness)



The Director:
Alexander Mackendrick

A DAY IN THE

Photographed by

A DAY IN THE life of a film usually shows on the screen in one or two minutes' playing time: it is a series of fragments with no apparent relation to each other—little more than meaningless repetitions, reactions to something already established or not yet covered, a procession (frequently interrupted) of odd little vacuums, and of two alternating moods: preparation—when hardly anything seems to be happening—and the intense concentration of rehearsal or take.

*

Here are some things that happened during a day's shooting of *The Man in the White Suit*—a film produced at Ealing Studios by Sidney Cole, directed by Alexander Mackendrick, scripted by Roger MacDougall, Alexander Mackendrick and John Dighton, photographed by Douglas Slocombe, designed by Jim Morahan: to be edited by Bernard Gribble. The players include Alec Guinness, Joan Greenwood, Cecil Parker and Ernest Thesiger. The story is the comedy of a backroom boy (played by Guinness) who invents a fabric that will neither get dirty nor wear out: both big industrialists and the trade unions are appalled at a discovery that threatens to put so many people out of work or business, and find themselves in uneasy alliance. . . .

The scenes shot during this day all took place on a large set representing a laboratory, on the main stage at Ealing. Doors at one end: windows in two walls, looking out on an ingenious model, constructed in perspective, of a rooftop view of an industrial town: shelves with bottled chemicals line the other wall, which stops two thirds of the way down—the set at the moment has 3½ walls: in the centre, a geometrical arrangement of desks, glass-topped cupboards, work tables with retorts, pipettes, etc.

The first scene to be shot is part of a sequence showing the young man about to try out his experiment. (A technical adviser, a young chemist from Manchester, is around on the set to produce chemical reactions that are harmless but look impressive.) It contains no more than half a dozen lines of dialogue—preparing his experiment, the young man is momentarily interrupted by someone inquiring for someone else's office. There are three rehearsals, two takes, in about half an hour.

After that, rehearsals for a more complicated shot, the beginning of which is shown in the still of Alec Guinness and Cecil Parker at the top of this page. Guinness has been well lunched and wine by the bland capitalist (Parker): he returns with him to the laboratory, making an impressive entry with a cigar—to the astonishment of an assistant. As they walk over to the middle of the set, followed by a third man (Russell Waters), Parker speaks expansively of the facilities he will grant, the money he will invest. . . . The progression of the sequence is—frontal shot of the entry of Guinness and Parker, followed by Waters: cut to reaction shot of the assistant: cut back to Guinness and Parker, followed by Waters, the camera panning with them as they walk. Shots 1 and 3 are actually filmed in one, the reaction shot being cut in later.

Discussion on correlating the movements of the three actors and the camera goes on



Left: Mackendrick rehearses the scene illustrated top left, and confers with Alec Guinness and Cecil Parker. Below left: an actor prepares: Guinness before the take



LIFE OF A FILM

Daniel Farson



The Star: Alec Guinness



The Cameraman:
Douglas Slocombe

for some time. Chalk marks are drawn on the floor. The original plan is temporarily abandoned, another camera position considered, then after two minutes also abandoned. During the technical discussions, Guinness is apparently abstracted and disinterested—but he suddenly turns round and interrupts: "Isn't that movement rather aggressive? I shouldn't bear down on him (*the assistant*). . . ."

The shot is completely rehearsed before lunch.

Mackendrick works without flamboyance. He rehearses the actors with much attention to detail. He has sketched each set-up himself beforehand, and the design of each shot, amplified by the art department, is pasted into the script. He is unhurried, reflective (see stills on right-hand side) but nearly always demonstrates a point. A director with an instinctive visual approach (as the sketches show), he is also personally concerned with his scripts. This is his second film, the first being *Whisky Galore*, which he adapted with Compton Mackenzie from the latter's novel: before that, he collaborated on the scripts of *The Blue Lamp* and *Saraband for Dead Lovers*.

After lunch, the shot of Guinness and Parker lined up, the actors go through the first take. "That's good", the director comments: "now let's make the next one better". Two more follow, then the actors pose for stills: a break follows, while Douglas Slocombe supervises the lining up of a new camera position at the other end of the set. The gap in the third wall is filled by a flat fitted in: the set is now practically closed, approachable only through the door or round the back, where there is a narrow gap at the other end of the third wall, in front of which stands the camera.

It is through this gap that, shortly after the tea break, Sir Michael Balcon appears. The production chief of Ealing Studios pays a brief visit to the set, and sits in a chair near the director's, just before the final rehearsal for the take.

There are two takes. Throughout the day, though sometimes called upon to play the same scene (in rehearsals and takes) more than half a dozen times, Guinness' performance never varies—unless he and the director decide on some alteration. This in spite of having constantly to smoke a cigar which he does not much care about. Guinness is the most accomplished of actors, with a technique proof against any disturbance.

*

Sir Michael leaves. There is one more take; and that is all. *The Man in the White Suit* has had another day's life. Outside, the afternoon light is beginning to fade. The actors go back to their dressing rooms, the lights are switched off except for a pool on one corner of the set, where Mackendrick, Douglas Slocombe and the camera operator are talking, discussing (one supposes) set-ups for the next day. Tolerantly Mackendrick consents to be interrupted for the photograph reproduced above. Then the group is re-formed, the discussion continues. There are still another twenty days to go. . . .



Right: three studies, in as many minutes, of Alexander Mackendrick—asking for silence before the take: watching the take: and meditating afterwards. Below, right: Sir Michael Balcon visits the set. Left: a view of the set and the model built in perspective outside the window





PARIS



Souvenirs Perdus

A new French film, *Souvenirs Perdus*, to be shown soon in Britain as *Lost Property*, contains four separate episodes and some of the leading stars of the French cinema. The link between each story is an object in a lost-property office. Of the two scenes shown here, one is a comedy with Francois Périer and Suzy Delair, the other a melodrama with Gérard Philipe as a pathological murderer and Danièle Delorme as his victim. Other players are Pierre Brasseur and Edwige Feuillère, Yves Montand and Bernard Blier. The director is Christian Jaque, and the stories were written by Jacques Prévert, Henri Jeanson and Bernard Zimmer.

Carol Reed's new film, (*An Outcast of the Islands*, scripted by W. E. C. Fairchild (who adapted *Morning Departure*) from the Joseph Conrad novel, is a tale of adventure set in the East Indies. The cast includes Trevor Howard, seen in the two stills here, Kerima (right), a discovery from Algiers, Ralph Richardson, Wendy Hiller, Robert Morley and George Coulouris. Exteriors were taken in Ceylon, interiors are now being completed at Shepperton.

LONDON



An Outcast of the Islands

HOLLYWOOD

A REPORT ON the profits of the major Hollywood studios for the year 1950 shows a gain over 1949 of nearly \$1,000,000. This may appear relatively small, but it does indicate a hopeful trend in an industry that has been going through many difficult readjustments in recent years. It can be attributed in part to increased attendances, but in greater measure to rigid production economies that have cut down studio waste in time and money.

Spectacle, as *Samson and Delilah*, *King Solomon's Mines* and others have proved, is certainly profitable. 20th Century-Fox have recently completed a Technicolor *David and Bathsheba*, directed by Henry King, and starring Gregory Peck as the King, Susan Hayward as Bathsheba, Kieron Moore as Uriah the Hittite, with Francis X Bushman making a comeback as Saul. Goliath is played by Walter Lulun, a Polish wrestler nearly seven feet tall and weighing 320 pounds. Palestinian buildings were reconstructed in the Arizona desert (where exteriors were shot), and the Israelite and Philistine warriors represented by 2,000 Mexicans. Next, from the same studio: Jeanne Crain in *The Story of Esther*.

Gabriel Pascal is to produce at R.K.O. a version of Bernard Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*, with Jean Simmons as Lavinia. According to Mr. Pascal, the scenario (by Noel Langley) was approved by Mr. Shaw before his death. Another spectacular departure for the same company (breaking their long crime and violence cycle) should be the film which Roland Petit's Ballets de Paris have contracted to make. Although the story will no doubt be a musical or ballet subject, no script has yet been written. Ballet also figures strongly in the new Samuel Goldwyn project, a romantic musical inspired by the life of Hans Andersen. Danny Kaye portrays the fairy-tale writer and Moira Shearer a Copenhagen ballerina. The choreography will be by George Balanchine: the script from a treatment originally written ten years ago for Goldwyn by Jo Swerling: and the film will be in colour.

The House on Telegraph Hill, a Fox picture directed by Robert Wise, with Valentina Cortesa, and the Collier Young-Ida Lupino production *Man of the World*, are both designed to show aspects of the work of the United Nations. This is the result of U.N.E.S.C.O. co-operation, given with the aim of presenting a true picture of how the United Nations operates, and of supplying technical information on inter-racial problems. Dore Schary and Stanley Kramer are other producers interested in the scheme.

A financial outlay of \$3,000,000 and 500,000 drawings are behind the latest Disney cartoon, *Alice in Wonderland*, said to have been the most difficult ever attempted by his studio. The problem of voice-casting Alice was settled after two hundred interviews or tests by the choice of an English girl, Kathryn Beaumont, aged 11. According to Mr. Disney, "she comes from the mid-England country, where the original Alice lived. She has enough accent to please the English but is not too British to please American audiences".

ARTHUR MARBLE.

ROME

STATISTICAL ASPECTS of the motion picture industry seldom provide figures comforting to those who still believe in the cinema's future as an art. Recent compilations suggest that even Italy, in recent years considered by many a hopeful haven for independently minded cinematographers, is no exception and suffers from a world-wide malady.

Of slightly more than one hundred films produced in this country during 1950, barely 15 per cent were directed, with varying results, by the men who have in recent years done so much to put Italian cinema firmly on the post-war map. The remaining 85 per cent, when not concerned, under the uninspired guidance of innumerable directors sufficiently pliable to what is known as the box-office pulse, with an obvious and rather violent attempt at loosening Italian tear ducts in true Neapolitan fashion, were busy at the other extreme, provoking (or attempting to induce) laughter in a series of singularly low comedies. One seemingly shameless comedian, a popular favourite named Toto, whose fine talent has been misused for years, managed during the past year to star in no less than ten films shown on Italian screens. It is an unfortunate reflection of Italian public taste that most of his pictures have found their way into the top ranks of 1950's money-making Italian films.

To be sure, it is comforting to note the addition of two promising recruits from the documentary field, Emmer and Antonioni, to one's list of noteworthy directors. But it is less pleasing, though perhaps not unreasonable, to register the almost complete surrender to commercial demands of one, and possibly two, previously well-regarded directors—whose names, while awaiting further evidence, we shall omit. Significant, however, is the fact that one of these two completed three films during 1950, compared with an average of one picture each for most other Italian directors worthy of mention. A director's value being obviously not measured in terms of speed or number of films turned out, let me hasten to add that these others were held to one picture, with one notable exception, through no choice of their own. The exception is de Sica, who took his time in making *Miracolo a Milano*. But de Sica's difficulties in obtaining sufficient backing for this film, even after such a picture as *Bicycle Thieves*, are well known. The local audiences' habit of avoiding the best Italian films until they are "discovered" and honoured abroad is a constant source of discouragement to the top directors, and has in many cases resulted in tightened purse-strings at the ever-wary sources of film finance. Lattuada recently told me that if the present critical situation continues, he will be forced to abandon feature film direction entirely, and that for his own satisfaction he will devote his efforts to 16mm work. The situation may not be quite as hopeless as that, but there is much room for thought, and certainly unlimited space for improvement.

In view of the situation, serious Italian producers and critics have welcomed, as a step in the right direction, the potential controlling power (applicable to both home and foreign markets) of the newly instituted seal adopted by ANICA, the Italian Producers' Association. The ANICA seal, according to the official announcement, is to be awarded only to films meeting certain "artistic and technical standards", and pictures not in possession of the seal may not be exported. Presumably, dependent on the usual stumbling blocks of such systems—the actual setting of the "standards" and the competence of the judging committee—the seal will discourage hit and run productions and encourage a general raising of quality all along the line, while the chances that foreign audiences will see the sub-standard Italian product, so lowering their opinion of the Italian film (and also its cash returns), will be considerably lessened. Those, at least, are the intentions. It would be well, however, for both industry officials and potential backers to remember, especially in view of the fact that the Italian industry cannot survive on home market grosses alone, and must therefore rely on export, that this favourable opinion abroad was formed on the basis of films made by just those directors whose films, during 1950, totalled a mere 15 per cent of the national product.

ROBERT HAWKINS.

CASE HISTORY OF A MOVIE

Dore Schary

In recent issues of SIGHT AND SOUND we have published two articles designed to illuminate the actual creative processes of film-making. Thorold Dickinson's essay on adapting Hardy's "Mayor of Casterbridge", with its long script extract (for a film which now, alas, will not be made), dealt with the stylistic problems of re-shaping a novel into a film. Last month's correspondence between Thornton Wilder and Sol Lesser showed the transition from theatre to film, the relations between writer and producer, and the solving of separate anxieties and ambitions.

Case History of a Movie describes the birth of a film from the producer's point of view. Its source, as often with American films, was a magazine story, "The Next Voice You Hear", read one day by Dore Schary, Vice President in Charge of Production of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. His account of the various happenings between this moment and the completion of a script, gives a vivid insight into the craft of film-making in Hollywood, a glimpse of that efficiency, speed and enthusiasm characteristic of the American product. This article is an extract from Case History of a Movie, as told by Mr. Schary to Charles Palmer, covering the story of the entire production, and reprinted by permission of the publishers, Random House, New York.

I

ONE NOONTIME in the spring of 1948, in Wilmington, Delaware, author George Sumner Albee was lunching with a Dr Morris. The two men got to chatting about the state of the world, particularly man's misuse of certain scientific miracles. Something suddenly struck Albee funny; he grinned and remarked that one of these miracles might be used to advantage. "You know", he said, "wouldn't it be something if God would come on the radio and give people such a bad scare they'd wake up and behave themselves"! Morris laughed and, over coffee, the two of them dreamed up a lot of miracles which might do the waking. But it wasn't until a few evenings later that Albee recognized it as the germ idea of a story. He was spending the evening in New York with his friend Dale Eunson, fiction editor of *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, and ribbing Eunson pleasantly about the reluctance of magazines to print stories with originality. "For instance"? Eunson challenged. Albee hesitated a second, then remembered the conversation about God coming on the radio. "We'd use that", said Eunson. "You write it and we'll buy it". Fortunately, Albee then caught a cold which sent him to bed for four days and gave him time to think out the story. The time seems short, but the germ idea was so lucidly simple and concise that it did not need complicated plotting, only to be dressed with incident and circumstance. Albee's literary agent read the manuscript and said it was so bad she would not even submit it to the magazine editors. But by now Albee was so confident that the story said something which needed saying that he got himself a new agent, breaking a friendship of a decade in the process, and transmitted the story to Dale Eunson. *Cosmopolitan* bought the story the next morning, and ran it in their issue of August, 1948.

The Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Administration Building, four stories of white concrete set in green lawn, is located at the east end of the production lot and is known because of its air-conditioning system as the Iron Lung. In its four hundred offices are housed the company executives, the lawyers, the several producers, the writers, and Kenneth MacKenna's Story Department, to which in June 1948 as a matter of everyday routine came the advance proof of the *Cosmopolitan* issue containing *The Next Voice You Hear*. Dorothy Pratt sifted through the morning's grist on her desk and assigned the story to one of the fifteen story analysts in her department. The analyst drew off a synopsis, put down a personal opinion, and relayed the file along the corridor to editor Marjorie Thorson.

These synopses are designed to capture the producer's interest and give him the essential bones of the stories: they

provide the only means by which an executive can even begin to cover the field in the hours (usually the late night hours) he can set aside for his reading. When a synopsis intrigues him he calls for the original and reads it in full. Often our reader's synopsis, particularly of a long novel, is better than the original for our purposes: crisper, the story line cleaner, and the characters standing out in sharper relief.

Most Metro readers and sub-editors come to the studio direct from college, where they have majored in literature and achieved a sufficient fluency in at least one language to read foreign story material in the original. All of them have broad human interests and good cultural backgrounds; most of them have travelled. Readers are paid from sixty five to one hundred twenty five dollars per week, and in the course of a single year they and their counterparts in the Loew's offices in New York, Paris and London synopsise almost twenty-five thousand pieces of material. Since they read much of it in publishers' advance proofs, they know long ahead of time how the magazine serials come out.

Strangely, despite the avalanche of plays, novels, magazine stories and manuscript "screen originals", it is not easy to find the thirty to fifty stories on which the studio must build its year's production. The fact is, when we buy a story we virtually open up a new business in which we will invest a capital of from several hundred thousand dollars up to three or four million. Therefore we ask quite a lot from a story before we buy it.

First of all, a story must be "for us": it must fit our programme, permit practical casting, and generally be ready to go. But it must also have wide appeal to all kinds of people, it must be adaptable to visual telling, contain fresh pictorial elements to satisfy the audience eye, must be built around strong and intriguing characters (preferably with a good part for one of our contract stars), permit telling on the screen in not much more than ninety minutes, be non-topical enough not to "date" before we get our investment back. And it must sparkle with enough of that intangible called showmanship to make millions of people hurry through their dinners on a rainy night and park too far from an overcrowded theatre because they just can't wait another day. This is an ideal, I'll admit, but we always try for the brass ring.

Oddly, the Story Department does not so much buy stories as "sell" them—that is, bring them to the attention of the studio's producers who must select stories for their pictures. When the synopsis on *Next Voice* came down the line, the editors were sufficiently intrigued to read the whole version; which, since the original was a short story, was attached in full. When they had read it they found themselves tantalised,

because any story which caught their interest so sharply would surely have a chance to catch the interest of the millions outside. But they had to admit that the conversion of the story to the screen offered great difficulties, and when the producers who had seen the synopsis agreed, the story was regretfully shelved.

This took place a month or so before I came into Metro as head of production. I happened to come across *Next Voice* independently, in a copy of *Cosmopolitan* which I picked up to read on the train. My reaction was the same as that of the editors: I loved the idea and didn't know how to do it. When I checked in at the studio I talked the story over with Kenneth MacKenna and we decided to buy it anyway, gambling on the chance that we could find a way to beat the problem. But the price turned out to be higher than we thought we should invest on such a long shot, and the project went on the shelf the second time, apparently for good.

That was in September of 1948. I thought of the story off and on for the next year, with a lack of ideas which began to grow embarrassing. Then one morning it broke open.

II

The term "producer" has many meanings in Hollywood. I will be talking here about only the real producers, the men who truly contribute to their pictures and to the industry, who try to do a job rather than hold one. Even so, the species has many variations.

Some, like Sam Goldwyn, own their own studios. Others, like Hal Wallis, are semi-independent, in that they own their own production companies but use the physical facilities, distribution services, and often the financing of the major companies. Most producers, however, are employees of a large studio who carry the management responsibility for individual pictures.

In essence, a producer is a man who starts with an idea or hope and ends with a completed picture ready for the screen. The idea may be an actual germ of a new story, or it may be obstinate belief that an existing property like *The Next Voice You Hear* can somehow be made into a successful movie.

The public has heard of a few producers like Selznick, Zanuck, Goldwyn and De Mille, but except for a lot of bad jokes they have only the foggiest idea of what a producer really does. Actually it's not at all mysterious. He's the "head man" of a given film enterprise. It is the producer who hires or assigns the writer, the director and other varied talent, and, acting as founder and general manager of the project, guides and co-ordinates these talents until he comes out at the far end with a film sufficiently alluring and satisfying to a worldwide audience to bring its investment back with a profit. Sometimes a less active routine is followed, in which case our hero becomes an ex-producer, often very swiftly. He is a rather positive character and his pictures will all tend to reflect a "point of view" which becomes his style. I've noticed a common denominator in all of the successful producers: they all love the actual routine of making pictures; in fact, they're usually a little stagestruck.

Usually, the producer's only hobby is the picture business, if only because that's all he has time for. He can never admit that there is such a word as "final": he is constantly re-examining everything about his project, eternally looking for those minor improvements which may add up to make an adequate picture into a good or a great one. Unfortunately, this process is not self-stopping upon the completion of the picture, and he is probably a little unhappy about everything he has ever done.

I've mentioned that I had not been able to get that *Next Voice* story idea out of my mind. It was a superb story for a

magazine; the printed story happens in the reader's imagination, it plays before your mind's eye and you can alter the imaginary image to suit your own taste. But a movie plays before your physical eye, and we can show you only one picture at a time and that picture must have specific reality. Those intriguing miracles of Albee's—the sinking of the Continent of Australia, the growing of angels' wings on the atheists, etc.—just wouldn't work on the screen. The sinking of Australia would obviously be a "special effects" miniature sequence, and the actual photograph of feathered wings growing on some of our actors would just be funny. But above and beyond these matters of mechanics, I felt very strongly that the God I worship wouldn't perform this particular kind of miracle; He wouldn't flaunt his power, He wouldn't humiliate his children. I felt that, for film, the story should be built around a wholly different kind of miracle. I didn't know what kind.

And there was another problem; a very serious problem of dramatics. The printed story began with the effects of God's radio words on the members of one family, but as the story progressed the first characters were left behind and new characters were touched on, until at the end the cast included the population of the world.

In the magazine it was very effective. But we have found from long experience, some of it unhappy, that the core of a successful picture is its characters. From beginning to end, the film must follow the fortunes of one, two or three people about whom the audience is sure to feel strongly, and it's best that the audience be sympathetic, that they love the people and perhaps identify themselves with them and be glad when things turn out well for them in the end. In the words of the old industry bromide, to which you, the audience, always demands a satisfying answer, "who will we be rooting for"? Again, I didn't know.

Then one night, a year after the story had been shelved, a tantalizing shadow of an idea drifted into my mind. I couldn't pin it down, but next morning I woke about six with the story still in my mind and feeling as though it were about to break. There seemed to be a clue in a parallel situation of some years ago when I read Paul Gallico's *Joe Smith, American* and was equally puzzled about how to convert it into a picture. We had found a way to lick that problem: if I could recapture that old thought process perhaps the same approach would beat this one. I kept thinking about Joe Smith, Joe Smith. . . .

Then came the break. Why not let God speak on the Radio to Joe Smith himself? Give Joe the same kind of wife and son he had in the earlier picture, the same typical middle-class American environment, the same petty annoyances that would seem so big until something bigger than the physical world came back into his life. The idea began to shape itself, to take on colour.

What about the problem of the miracles? As so often happens, the good things in a story come when you have to go to work and fill in the holes. Here we'd fill in the hole with truth, the film-story miracles would be those that had always been around Joe but which he'd stopped noticing; the sun and the moon and the rain, and growth, and the astounding miracle of birth. Automatically, this supplied a destination for the events in our story; the goal would be Joe's realisation. The action would be the events which cause Joe ultimately to open his eyes to these miracles and to learn to create for himself new miracles of love, kindness and peace.

The producer's best insurance for a long productive life is a split personality in which the artistic is balanced by the practical. The concept was now complete, and it had all the qualities needed to make a creditable picture. But, came the

practical question—could this picture go out into the theatres and earn its living.

Although there is no such thing as a “sure-fire” picture, a fact which the industry rediscovers expensively at intervals, the outlook for most pictures can be estimated in the light of our experience with the past pictures of the same type. A big western, for instance, is more or less a stable commodity. If your new one has a fresh approach, a well-constructed story, a competent director and proven stars, you have a basis for estimating whether the proposed budget will be recovered with a profit. And without profit on some pictures to balance your losses on others, you and the studio employees who depend on you for jobs are soon going to be out of same.

With *The Next Voice* all we had to go on were the axioms that “message” pictures drive people away from the theatres, and religion is poison at the box-office. We would have both. Balancing these considerations was the conviction that we could make a whale of an interesting and exciting picture; that in the present state of the world a lot of people needed the assurance and comfort that this story could bring, and that if you supply a real need you usually somehow get compensated for it. Also, any showman is bound to have in the back of his mind the tempting realisation that it's often the gambling pictures which make the smashes.

It's part of the job of an executive to make decisions: he's supposed to have enough experience and judgment to make more right ones than wrong ones. And make them he must, quickly and cleanly, resisting the temptation to draw comfort and protection—and delay—from too much counselling and temporizing. I laid out in my own mind certain approaches to the project which would minimize the gamble, and asked Kenneth MacKenna to see about buying the picture rights to Mr. Albee's original story. Our New York office wired that they could get together with the literary agent on price. Schary the executive took a deep breath, hoped he was right, and said to Schary the producer, “We'll do it.”

III

The picture would have to be pushed through on a shooting schedule so short that most “quality” directors would consider it impossible. I wanted Bill Wellman. We had worked together very happily on *Battleground*: pictures all the way from *Wings* and *A Star is Born* proved him a magnificent director of realism. He's a rabid family man, feels things deeply, and is completely honest. Billy has great ability and experience and is a man of enormous enthusiasm: if he would catch fire on the idea and agree to gamble his reputation on a short schedule, we'd be well along. I asked him to come up to the office.

He sat down by the desk, fixed me with a sceptical blue eye, and the butterflies which always live in producers' stomachs began to beat their wings. I opened, “Billy, I've got a notion . . .” and gave him the nub of the idea. Fortunately, there's a lot of Joe Smith in Wellman's personal philosophy. He got the idea before I had finished telling it, and characteristically shoved his whole pile of chips out into the middle of the table. The butterflies took a short nap.

Now the bare idea would have to be built up into a rounded story, and then into a detailed screenplay. How would it be done? Well, you can't pin down the creative process into a step-by-step routine in the germ stage of the story: you take what your subconscious flips up to the surface and put the pieces together. But you do know, from experience, what pieces you need to put together into a story structure.

We had the central situation—“God talks on the radio”. Our theme flowed logically out of that. “If everybody behaved

well toward each other we'd drive out envy, hatred and contempt, and be a lot better off”. We had our characters—a father, mother and young son of a typical “Joe Smith, American” family. Our physical locale flowed naturally from the characters—an FHA bungalow with a mortgage, a neighbourhood to suit, an aircraft plant where Joe worked, and so on. All this was raw material for the events which must be invented to bring the theme home to the characters and fulfil the purpose of the story.

We also had our problems. Somehow we had to fill the hole left by eliminating the sensational miracles of the printed story. We'd fill it with the “everyday miracles” which the story would bring our characters to see and realise. We needed a structure, a physical plan in which the events of the story would be arranged. Mr. Albee's story had been divided into the seven days of the Biblical Creation, and the same plan would work out splendidly for us. But there was still the problem of the Voice.

In the printed story, God's Voice spoke and the characters heard it; you read the words the Voice spoke, and you heard it, too. But you heard it in your imagination, and so it could be a wonderful Voice that was fitting to the way you think of God. Your neighbour “heard” an entirely different Voice. But what happens when we carry the same thing over into the film medium? First, we would have to hire an actor to impersonate the Voice of God. This would rightly be considered presumptuous and irreverent. It would also sound completely phony. Of course, we could put the actor's voice through filters and reverberation chambers, underscore it with ethereal music, superimpose clouds over the radio set and so on through the whole bag of tricks. But we all felt, from our varied religious points of view, that this picture had no place for tricks or devices. There was only one logical conclusion to us: we would never actually hear the Voice.

At first glance it seemed that this pulled the keystone out of the whole structure. But again the lash of necessity compelled new thinking which worked out to the advantage of the picture. We would capitalise our disadvantage by inventing action which would prevent us from hearing the Voice, and try to make that action so interesting that the audience would never feel we were ducking the issue. Of course, we would have to invent a different piece of voice-blocking action for each one of the seven nights—and here, ready-made, was our “floor plan”—the starting point for our story thinking.

This was in November of 1949. I had to go to New York for the opening of *Battleground*, and by the time I got back home the idea was filling out into the shape of a story. The subconscious had come up with good visual reasons for not hearing the Voice on the first and second nights, and also on the last night—which, added the fleshing-out process, would logically take place in a crowded church. The “everyday miracle” which would pervade the story could be only one—the miracle of birth. Joe and Mary's baby would be born on the seventh night, and the birth would contribute the climax of the picture.

Now, although there was much left to do, the destination had come out in the clear and the road to it was apparent. It was time for me to call in a screen writer. For the record, it should be stated that the writer generally comes on a project at a much earlier stage. But I earned my living at the craft for a long time, and on a picture which I produce personally I can't conscientiously start a writer on salary until I have set up a story line I know will work. I asked Milton Beecher, who handles our salaried writers, to check on the availability of a young man named Charles Schnee.



A scene from "The Next Voice You Hear". Gary Gray, Nancy Davis, Lilian Bronson, James Whitmore



Dore Schary visits the set. Left to right: Gary Gray, Nancy Davis, Dore Schary, William Wellman, James Whitmore

IV

There is no such thing as a typical screen writer except in cartoons, but Charlie Schnee is reasonably representative. Contrary to the cartoons, his coat and trousers usually match, but he does wear the characteristic horn-rimmed glasses and goes in for strange shoes. Typically, he got into the profession of screen writing by accident; he graduated from Yale Law School in 1939, and while waiting for the result of his bar exams, wrote a play. I wanted him for this picture because he's a fellow with great feeling and this would be a highly emotional story. I have found also that he stimulates my own thinking in a conference, stirs me up, and I knew that he was secure enough in his job to call things as he saw them rather than accept a bad idea because the producer thought it was great. Also we had him under contract and he was approaching the finish of his current assignment.

He dropped in for a minute or two in mid-week to say that the idea felt good and he'd like to take on the assignment. At the end of the week he came in for a meeting with his first ideas for building out the story.

It was pretty well established by now that the emotional line of the story would be fear, mortal fear which would key the reawakening of our characters to the freedom from fear which awaits them in God. So Charlie's ideas tended to demonstrate that theme. He had thought of Johnny, the young son, becoming frightened and running away. In a search for conflict and a means of causing fear in Joe, he had thought of the factory foreman character, Mr. Brannan. He was exploring the idea of a fear that Mary's pregnancy would end in trouble (which later turned out as the false-labour incident), and he wondered about the notion of bringing in a temptation for Joe, which later developed into the bar sequence. Between us, we now had the incidents for each of the seven nights which would prevent the actual hearing of the Voice. Lucy Ballentine, my top secretarial assistant, brought her book into the office and we dictated the first approach to what the Voice would say each night.

A week later Charlie came out to the house in the evening. The projectionist ran off the 1941 *Joe Smith, American* to refresh us on the characters and circumstances. Mrs Schary urged Jill, Joy and Jeb off to bed, Lucy got out her book, and we started pinning down the story. A columnist later said that the story was written in three hours. It was dictated in three hours; there's a vast difference.

This one evening at the house was simply the crystallization of a year's thinking, some of it conscious and a lot of it that wonderful free ride which the subconscious mind gives to a project which locks its interest. But the final dictation went with the smoothness that often blesses the truly simple story; we filled our need for some physical manifestation of God's power with the idea of the cue-on rainstorm, and at one o'clock in the morning Lucy closed her book. We sat around for a while in the den, with that pleasantly drained feeling which follows a tense run, talked a little about the casting of the picture, and then Charlie started along home. I went out to his car with him and as I walked back towards the house I looked up at the stars and had the odd feeling that I knew them better than when I'd come home a few short hours ago.

Two days later, over lunch in my suite at the studio (it was frankfurters and baked beans, the luxury in this business is fabulous), Bill Wellman, Charlie and I read the thirty typed pages of yellow paper which made up the story treatment. We agreed that it would work. Bill began to see what we could do with it in the way of directorial touches, and went out on the limb with the guarantee that it could be shot on a schedule so short as to be considered fantastic. The treatment was sufficiently detailed for Charlie to figure he could cut the time for writing the screenplay down to four weeks.

It's one thing to prepare a picture, and another to persuade the authorities to place it on the schedule, but Schary the producer put the case to Schary the executive in courageous man-to-man fashion, and came out with the green light. I notified the Production Department that we would be ready to go around March first, and to set the picture up on their schedules.

Ostensibly because the project was a dangerous gamble, but actually because the lot of us saw a chance to have some professional fun, *Next Voice* became a test case for reducing some of the high costs which have plagued the industry in recent years. You can cut the costs in one of two general ways. One way is to reduce arbitrarily all expenditures, using less of everything, including talent. The other way is to substitute thought for money. Often the pleasant result of the latter is that the goading of your ingenuity and imagination make the picture not only cheaper but better. If what happens between two people in a scene is strong enough you can play it in front of a board fence, and if you can't use money for an



The entire M.G.M. unit that worked on "The Next Voice You Hear". The main players can be distinguished on the left. Dore Schary and William Wellman in the centre

eye-filling set you can go to work and build up the emotional content of the scene.

The Next Voice was already committed to simple locales and action. And although Charlie would write in enough sets for visual variety, he would make sure that each set backed enough of the action to buy its way into the picture. For example, we wouldn't plan a 100-yard travelling shot along a factory corridor when we could have Joe make the same plot points while he changed his shoes in a corner of a locker room. However, if our story had actually contained important plot action that had to be played in the expensive travel shot to put over an essential point, we'd line it up cheerfully and without stinting. It's all a question of values.

V

Charlie Schnee took the thirty yellow pages home to convert our treatment into a screen play. From the physical side, his job was now to convert thirty pages of closely typed prose into approximately one hundred "sides" of screen play, expressed in dialogue and instructions. The job would call not only for creative writing talent, but for a technique equivalent to that possessed by an architect, attorney, or other professional practitioner.

Up to this stage of a picture, some of the participants may have been able to complete their statements with a wave of the hand and "You see what I mean". But there would now be no room for vagueness.

The screen writer's first step is to reach an explicit crystallization in his mind as to which character is the lead, just what the story is about, and exactly where it is going. With this as a backbone he now goes through this material, discarding whatever does not sharply develop the characters and move the story along the straight line to its goal, and relating everything else to that line.

He must invent threads of action and reaction and "business" to visualise those thoughts of which we can't take pictures and to give his characters the stuff of life, then weave these threads in and out of the scenes, embroidering the straightforward progress of the plot, so that scenes take on relationship to each other and eventually weave into a pattern of over-all unity. He must find ways to introduce his important people

characteristically and memorably without being obvious about it.

He must invent brief transitions to take the place of lengthy dull sequences, and many points must be "planted". For some reason, certain actions are funnier, more dramatic, or whatever, if the way has been subtly prepared so that the unexpected seems logical. In *Next Voice* the laugh when the motorcycle cop catches Joe slamming back out of his driveway into the street is much bigger because we've already seen Joe back out too fast before (the "plant") and we know sometime he's going to get caught at it. And the plant was kept from being obvious by being made funny in itself, when Joe backed out almost into another driver and the two yelled insults at each other like good American motorists.

Everything the screen writer does he must test against two standards: the words "simple" and "inevitable". He must find economical scenes to visualise what the original writer nonchalantly disposed of with the impractical word "gradually". He must, particularly, distil and distil and combine and combine, until each scene of his final script has brevity and power and quickness, telling whole pages of dialogue in a single momentary exchange. The continuity of his piece must be on the screen, not on the sound track, if it's fully to utilize the power of the medium, and everything that happens must be arranged in a logical sequence of cause and effect so that at any point in the script he can say "Given these people, under these pressures, what is happening here is inevitable".

The writer may put a job through several versions, each one somewhat clearer and more refined, more of its non-essentials stripped away. And the point at which he knows his work is finished is the point at which he gets no credit for what he has done, when the piece has been refined down to such inevitable simplicity that the onlookers' reaction is, "It was a soft job—only one way he could possibly write it".

Charlie decided to work at home rather than at the studio, and he handed in the first third of the screenplay at the end of the first week. We worked on some changes, but I told him I liked the approach and to keep on going as he was headed. He turned in the second third eight days later, and after a few more sessions the whole ninety-five pages went down to the mimeographs in Edith Farrell's Script Department three days under his four-week deadline.

Screen writers sooner or later become resigned to the fact that the appearance of their first draft is greeted with, "Fine. Now we've got something to change". Which is healthy, within reasonable limits, because every specialist who applies his particular talent to a picture ought to "plus" it. Wellman and I had some changes; Billy in particular had a number of improvements later on. There were no deep structural alterations. But before the script could be stamped "completed" and shoved out into the stream, it has to be scrutinised by three highly specialised departments.

While everyone else is striving to make a film authentic in every tiny detail, Ruth de Saxe and her girls in the Legal Research Department are inching methodically through the script and planting in it a score of intentional inaccuracies. There is a mistaken idea that the appearance of one's face, name, property, telephone number, or whatever on a theatre automatically entitles one after a few legal preliminaries to a life-long pension in compensation for this invasion of privacy. Hence, Ruth tries to make sure that "any similarity to actual persons . . . is purely coincidental".

For instance, the script gave the name "Fred Brannan" to Joe's boss, a crotchety old man and an atheist. We checked Douglas Aircraft, where the sequence would be photographed and found that while there were some fifty employees named "Brannon" or "Brannan" or "Brannen" in their three local plants, none was employed as a foreman, either on the active or inactive list. An Atlas Aircraft Company was found to be in legal existence, so we changed ours to Ajax and made employees' badges accordingly, filling the extras' badges with names like "Dibson" which did not appear in any Los Angeles directories or reference books. Then, though we cleared the name "HOPSY TOPSY" for the repaint job on a rented Good Humor ice-cream truck, its chimes gave trouble; the Music Department okayed Good Humor's "Little Brown Jug" as in public domain, but reminded us that any accompanying chords or noodles would constitute an "arrangement", probably protected by copyright. And the radio call letters KIH which we thought we had invented turned out to be in use by an Alaskan Coastal Harbour Station; the FCC finally cleared the letters KWTB.

To the Censorship Department, *Next Voice* was a brand-new kind of problem. They have well-established standards for judging Esther Williams bathing suits and Lana Turner love scenes (this is generally considered by others on the lot to be pleasant work), but there were no precedents for our pregnancy angle. Yet when a vital plot point requires that your heroine have a baby seven days from your opening scene, you just can't tiptoe through the tulips. There was also a serious question about the reaction by religious groups to our lack of formality in speaking about God.

We put both matters up to Joseph Breen, who administers the self-policing code of the industry. He saw nothing vital that would be offensive, if filmed with honest intent and in good taste. But he did go on record with warnings that local censorship boards in various parts of the country would object to certain specific items. So we changed the words "jerk" and "lousy", skirted specific verbal reference to "pains", and made some other unimportant changes.

But it was also suggested that we eliminate Mary's curtain line, when she leaves the hospital after the false labour: "I feel like such a fool, leaving here just as big as when I came in". We felt that line was so human and so characteristic—and entirely decent in its spirit—that we decided to risk trouble with local censorship boards and leave it in. Any power of

censorship has serious implications to the whole idea of individual freedom. As a practical matter, we bow to it a good share of the time, to prevent local tampering with our pictures, but occasions arise when you have to say, "This is the way it's got to be", and battle it out.

This credo cracked into an all-or-nothing test when we sent the script down to Bob Vogel's International Department. Bob broke down the script knowing that it might be translated into twenty-eight languages for distribution in fifty-six foreign countries. One of his twin responsibilities is to make the action intelligible to people unfamiliar with many American customs. A more serious problem is worldwide censorship. He is concerned with a maze of moral, religious, political and nobody-knows-why taboos which overflow the eight type-written volumes on his desk.

Ordinarily, Vogel works up a list of changes which may render certain objectionable bits of the picture acceptable to various of the foreign markets. Sometimes we can amend the American version so that it will be acceptable elsewhere, sometimes we will shoot a given scene two ways. Obviously, we have to re-shoot any printed material that we want a foreign audience to read, and that is why you usually see a book or a piece of music in close up "insert" with little or no background. In this case foreign censorship problems were so complex that we had to decide to take our chance on the domestic gross.

On February 2nd the script covers were changed from "temporary" blue to "hit-the-road" yellow. There would be more changes, on the usual vari-coloured revision pages—the only way to freeze a script is to freeze your mind—but the changes from here on would not affect the production flow. The Accounting Department assigned Production Number 1488, and the trim little messenger girls spread out from the Script Department with the 115 mimeographed copies of the screenplay which would automatically set in motion the complicated machinery of producing a movie.



William Wellman

Films of the Month

A WALK IN THE SUN



IT IS PERHAPS superfluous nowadays to express surprise when gifted directors, especially in Hollywood, produce in between good work the most undistinguished of potboilers; it has happened so often, and few are the directors working within the commercial framework who have maintained a personal level without lapses into the anonymous routine product. The career of Lewis Milestone is, all the same, odd by any standards. His reputation rests on a few films of exceptional merit, greatly outnumbered by others that might have been made by any competent craftsman. Of his earliest films, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) is the best known and most significant; *The Racket* (1928) and *The Front Page* (1931) have not been seen for many years, and are overdue for revival. Of his numerous films in the 30's *The Captain hates the Sea* and *The General Died at Dawn* are said to be of most interest—they, too, have long been unavailable. But Milestone did not re-establish himself until 1940, with *Of Mice and Men*; and in 1944 he made a remarkable film, generally passed over in this country, about a group of American fliers captured by the Japanese, *The Purple Heart*: in 1945, *A Walk in the Sun*, in many ways the most impressive of all his works: and his most recent, *Halls of Montezuma*, another study of men in war, will be shown in London next month. These have been punctuated by one or two films of some quality—*North Star*, *The Red Pony*—and many more of practically no distinction.

A Walk in the Sun represents the summit of Milestone's career, not only for its exceptional virtues, but as his most considered film on a subject that specially interests him: the response of individuals to war. The first statement of this,



"A Walk in the Sun". Left: James Cardwell and Richard Conte: above a group with Dana Andrews: top right, John Ireland

of course, is the pacifist cry of *All Quiet*. In the minor but still considerable *The Purple Heart* the focus is narrowed to the obstinate heroism of a few American prisoners who refuse to give information to the Japanese, are horribly tortured and finally shot. *A Walk in the Sun* resumes the approach of *All Quiet*, but on a smaller scale, and with an emotional shift (already indicated in *The Purple Heart*): war is no longer an unacceptable outrage, an inhuman assault on nerves and sensibilities, but an unavoidable horror that the individual may or may not survive—at any rate, he has to try. In *All Quiet*, heroism itself seemed futile and meaningless, since the war was a monstrosity engineered by politicians and so many of the experiences of the trenches pointed to the brotherhood of men.

A Walk in the Sun confines its study to the events of a single day, and is a more compact, consistently sustained film than its predecessor. An American platoon is landed at Salerno; the Commanding officer has already been killed; the senior sergeant goes to contact another platoon, but does not return: Sergeant Porter assumes leadership, and rallies the men for their mission—the taking of a farmhouse six miles inland. For most of the film the emphasis is on tensions of waiting and isolation, interrupted by desultory spurts of action. As in *All Quiet*, Milestone explores the relationships between men in the unnatural calm preceding battle; while giving the platoon itself a group unity, he uncovers the pressures within it, the shifts and strains between men already unnerved by the loss of two leaders and difficult to discipline in the strange and empty countryside. Sergeant Porter cracks under the strain, and the quietly resourceful, determined Sergeant Tyne takes over. It is he who saves the platoon from what might have become panic, and leads it to the fulfilment of the mission.

On the slow six-mile march the platoon encounters an American army motor-cyclist, ambushes a German armoured car; interrogates two wandering Italian soldiers, glad to give themselves up; and the men talk, grumble and wisecrack among themselves. G.I. talk is reproduced in a kind of formalised patter, that makes vivid its peculiar repetitive idiom, jostling sentimentality and callousness, uncertainty and brashness, and pitches the film on a note of sustained intensity. This dialogue, and the acting, gives to the film a stylistic unity that *All Quiet* did not wholly attain. In *All Quiet* the surface was raw and realistic, and the dialogue, straining for qualities beyond this, sometimes fell into the declamatory and theatrical; the dialogue in *A Walk in the Sun*, though formal and even at times incantatory, is unstrained—the idiom intensifies without theatricality, working equally well



for humour and tragedy. Over and above this, Milestone has used some ballads (by an offscreen singer), the effect of which crystallises into poetry the moments of fatigue and suspense.

The dialogue is taken with a few alterations from Harry Brown's novel, which the script follows very closely. Though in fact there is little original writing in this script, Robert Rossen has done an imaginative adaptation, not least in the expansion of the character of Private Craven, who composes letters out loud to his sister, and many of whose remarks are now composed of the author's own comments in the book. The reshaping looks incidental on the surface, but is in a sense organic, because the fault of Harry Brown's novel is that it alternates a little monotonously between revelations of character by dialogue and paragraphs of direct prose comment on the general situation. By making these comments come in the film from the men themselves—from inside out, as it were—Rossen has heightened the tension and consistency of the whole story. The men are involved simultaneously with each other and with the war, and Milestone reinforces the closeness of texture by a taut and brilliant narrative. He concentrates on character, using many close-ups, and the group scenes, though they include a number of fairly long takes, are finely worked out and dramatically edited; he contrasts with these the brief action sequences, treated in a vivid panoramic style, with the camera moving laterally after the manner of *All Quiet*.

For the final assault on the farmhouse, the emphasis—after an almost unbearably tense scene of waiting—narrows down to the overwrought Sergeant Tyne as he crawls up the field, encountering at one moment the dead body of a comrade: then, after we have seen landscape and sky spinning through Tyne's eyes, the panoramic technique is employed again. A German machine gun appears at a window, the assault begins, and concludes with a memorable long shot of the field strewn with corpses and two or three injured men crawling or staggering towards the house. "It was so easy", says Craven, composing a letter, "so terribly easy. . . ."

The acting throughout is of a high standard, dominated by Richards Conte's Rivera—a dynamic portrait of a man in the process of becoming a veteran, hard-headed, ebullient and humorous. Dana Andrews, in one of his best performances, admirably suggests the latent strength of Tyne; Rivera's buddy, Friedman, is beautifully played by George Tyne; Norman Lloyd contributes an effective sketch of the sardonic Archimbeau, brooding over the coming battle of Tibet; John Ireland's Craven has exactly the right withdrawn reflective quality. The expressiveness of many dialogue scenes

is heightened by the photography of Russell Harlan, with its boldly framed groups and striking close-ups. The rather bleak, grey key of the photography as a whole works well enough, though an attempt to give the light an Italian quality—bright, warm, translucent—might have provided a further dramatic irony.

This humane and penetrating account of men in battle is Milestone's special contribution to the cinema, and has yielded work of a high order. It is not often, besides, that one sees in films the development of an artist's attitude toward a particular subject; in Milestone's case *A Walk in the Sun* marks a turning point, representing as it does a progression from direct, impassioned pacifism to an intellectual acceptance of war as a solution imposed on human affairs (with the rigours and sufferings of which the individual has to bear as he can), combined with an emotional revolt against it. In John Ford's *They Were Expendable*, one of the very few other great American war films, the Admiral at one point remarks: "Listen, Son. You and I are professionals. If the manager says 'Sacrifice'! we lay down the bunt and let somebody else hit the home runs . . ." The professionalism of war, the heroic ideals of dedication, the human solidarity discovered at a time of patriotic sacrifice, are not Milestone's concern. The Ford film draws its inspiration from these things, and is a tribute by a "professional" to a group of professionals. With Milestone the keynote is compassion, at times horror—pity for the fear, the isolation, the unnerving behind-the-lines tensions of war: individual reaches out to individual (the close shots of hands seem to symbolise this) in an effort to sustain that fraternity which has nothing to do with patriotism or heroism. One is reminded of E. M. Forster's "I hate the idea of causes, and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country". This is articulate in *All Quiet*, implied in *A Walk in the Sun*—the encounter with the Italians shows how quickly temporary barriers can be swept away. The war exists, it has to be fought, but the men admit to no patriotic ideals.

Tyne: "How do you feel about things, Arch?"

Archimbeau: "It's a long war. That's all I know about it".

Thus an exchange before the final battle; somehow, the men rise to the situation, they find themselves acting like veterans, they may even be "heroes"—Milestone would put inverted commas round the word. It is not a fashionable view, and it remains to be seen whether it will be accepted as eagerly as *Sands of Iwo Jima* or *Task Force* have been accepted. Certainly, when *A Walk in the Sun* was first distributed in America, it was not popular—the company, in fact, re-sold the film to get it off their hands. Now, for the same company (Fox), Milestone has completed *Halls of Montezuma*; but discussion of the implications of this new film must wait a month.

GAVIN LAMBERT.

FOURTEEN HOURS

Fourteen Hours is adapted from Joel Sayre's *New Yorker* account of the suicide of a young man who walked calmly one morning from his fifteenth floor hotel window, out on to the narrow ledge. There he stood all day, while police and relatives



"Fourteen Hours". Howard da Silva, Agnes Moorehead,
Paul Douglas, Robert Keith

appealed to him and huge crowds collected below, before he finally made the decision to jump. Sayre's was a proficient piece of journalism written not from the point of view of the man—who remained an object for curiosity and sympathy—but from that of the police officer (strongly and sympathetically played here by Paul Douglas) who succeeded in gaining his confidence and, so nearly, in talking him back to safety. John Paxton's script is conceived at the same level, and descends occasionally to rather hackneyed journalistic convention in the study of individuals in the crowd—a boy and girl who meet, a woman who decides not to divorce her husband. He misses except intermittently that sense of mass hysteria, of the crowd's positive contribution to the tragedy, which Sayre suggested. Cosick's problems—an unhappy childhood, a weak father and disastrously possessive mother, a broken engagement—are here expanded rather to provide an acceptable psychological interpretation than as an integral and vital part of the drama. But the dialogue is intelligently written and, thanks to performances of high calibre from Richard Basehart, conveying both a sympathetic personality and the delusions and exhibitionism of the only half sane, Barbara Bel Geddes (a small part sensitively and finely played), and Robert Keith, and a bravura show of hysterics from Agnes Moorehead, the central situation does emerge in its own right, the family conflicts become valid and credible.

The main problem is how to build towards a satisfactory conclusion. Henry Hathaway's direction ably conveys the excitements and tensions of the long day's waiting, the mechanics of the repeated rescue attempts. These must be topped, however, by a climax. Two endings were shot. One, true to life and dramatic logic, involved Cosick's jump and death. In the other he falls accidentally (a return to the room perhaps seemed too tame a breaking of tension), is caught on the police net and saved for the hopeful doctors. This, which is the conclusion used, must be regarded as a surrender to the supposed advantages of the happy ending. This apart, *Fourteen Hours* both wracks the nerves by physical excitements and conveys, without recourse to flashbacks and without departing from the window ledge, the elements of the family crisis.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

POOL OF LONDON

TIME WAS WHEN we longed for more realism in films set in the England we know, which used to be curiously neglected in screen fiction. Either we saw unconvincing stage scenery or, in American pictures, a Britain which never was nor could be. That is all changed now. Ealing Studios particularly have begun to give us the real thing in backgrounds, and have explored the rich character of our capital city, or at least its recognisable surfaces and its monuments, if not its types. What New York and Paris long ago had done for them, is now being done for London. Whatever faults there may be in *Pool of London* it is not the fault of neglecting the *genius loci*. London, the look of London during a summer week-end, is finely realised, the sights and sounds and atmosphere and the resulting pleasure of recognition itself, and the camera-work, give much enjoyment.

One never thought to have to find some disadvantage in this veristic approach. But I believe that it has its dangers. Principally, it makes the spectator doubly anxious to recognise, not merely the truth of the setting, but the realism of the characterisation and the story. Where the scene, and much of the activity (the waterfront bustle, the work of the river police, and the car chases) are so authentic, a correspondingly high degree of authenticity in the playing is looked for. And this is where some disappointment is quickly felt. Admittedly we are keener critics of authenticity also where our own familiar world is concerned. Small part performances of cockneys, though wholly acceptable in America, may strike the critic, when a cockney himself, as improbable; doubly so, I fear, when such a part emerges suddenly in the course of scenes of documentary verisimilitude. The small part may even stick out like a turn in a revue—which is what seems to me to



"Fourteen Hours". Richard Basehart, Barbara Bel Geddes

happen here in the case of that excellent actor George Benson, in his brief appearance as a comic sailor; or to Moira Lister, putting up a spirited performance of a theatre audience's idea of an East End harpy. That little roles, precise and yet full of character, may fit smoothly into even the most unexaggerated surface realism is demonstrated by the two barmaids we see—to whom all credit for not making a music-hall turn of 'characters' which seem to seduce even the most practised artists.

There is some uncertainty, too, in the handling of supporting players other than Miss Lister, Max Adrian, for instance, an admirable stage actor, is a villain so obvious that his every look might set the burglar alarm ringing, and who even in his dying fall prompts the awareness that this is acting with a large A—which would do finely before the 'floats' but looks out of place in the realistic set of the Rotherhithe tunnel. One feels sceptically that he could quite easily save himself by hoisting that other hand on to the bar as well.

It may be said that this is merely a cop and robber melodrama, and that it would be silly to expect too much in the way of character revelation. But a man-hunt is always more (not less) exciting when you can share to some extent the feelings and thoughts of the pursued. I confess I found Bonar Colleano's performance baffling. I suspect that originally the character had been thought of as a bluff simpleton—how else can one explain his cripplingly inept behaviour when he hands over to the predatory slut, transparently crooked, a packet which he was to be paid £50 to deliver intact to an agent in Holland, and calmly accepts her directions as to what he is to do instead? This seemed to me so completely out of character with the young seaman as Bonar Colleano presents him, that at first I thought (quite wrongly) that he must have some other scheme and was merely shamming to fool the woman. Bonar Colleano shows us at no time a simpleton of the kind who would make this scene plausible. On the contrary, he is the fly-est man aboard—the smart kid, the wise guy. This apparent confusion persisted and reached disastrous proportions in the scene where Mr. Colleano lies hidden on the barge, now smiling to himself (at being safe?), now frowning as an echo reaches him of the ladylike shipping clerk's strictures, her Dostoevskian insistence on the necessity of owning up and expiating his crime. It was not clear at all what was supposed to be going on in his mind.

A subplot concerns a lonely coloured seaman from Bermuda and a "typical" London girl (Susan Shaw) who befriends him. The colour question hardly rears its head, though the Bermudan gives off some mild and rather sententious opinions about intolerance on Greenwich Hill, while the young person simpers politely. Earl Cameron makes something of the part, and supplies the nearest approach to true feeling in the film; but again, like the excellence of the backgrounds, it seemed to me to show up the weakness of the main story all the more.

PHILIP HOPE-WALLACE

THE BROWNING VERSION

IN *The Browning Version* Terence Rattigan presented what it is, perhaps, not unfair to call Mr. Chips in reverse. His Crocker-Harris is the complete failure: broken in health, a petty tyrant of the form-room, disliked, or at best pitied, by his colleagues, hated by the venomous wife who delights in telling him of the affair she is carrying on with one of the



"The Browning Version". Nigel Patrick, Michael Redgrave, Jean Kent

masters. Rattigan used his central character less as the protagonist in a tragedy—even a minor tragedy—than to wring from him the possibilities for sentiment inherent in his situation. The series of humiliations, the kindnesses, such as the boy's gift which gave the play its title, which, motivated only by pity, dissolved into humiliations, were built up into a clever pattern of anti-climaxes. The situation did not develop, and the central figure remained passive, a victim. In the film, the need for a climax was clearly felt. The worm finally turns, throws himself on the mercy of the school, receives their applause and "finds the faith and courage to face his new life alone". In other words, an ending of theatrically effective sentiment betrays both the character and the truth of the rest of the film.

The ending apart, the film is a solid, respectful transcription of the play; at times a little dull, since the writer's failure to fill out his characters involves instead filling out scenes already adequately explored in the play. Anthony Asquith's aim as director seems to have been to obtrude his own personality as little as possible: discreet, accomplished, his handling always takes its cue from the writing. This places more responsibility on some of the players than they are able to bear. Nigel Patrick adequately suggests the conventional "good chap" caught up in a situation of unexpected complexity, but Jean Kent throws away some of her best scenes (such as that in which she destroys Crocker-Harris' pleasure in the boy's present) on the level of petulance rather than hatred, and Wilfrid Hyde-White, as the head-master, is content to play for the obvious comedy in the part rather than the underlying malice. Michael Redgrave's Crocker-Harris is, within the limitations imposed by the author, a performance of considerable distinction. The part is written and played as a dignified appeal for the audience's sympathy which never, until the unfortunate last scene, becomes blatant. Redgrave, seen for the most part in profile, shoulders bowed, face frozen in the expectation of unkindness, conveys with some subtlety the transitions of resignation, grief, defeat and final hope. If the film, for all that it appears to develop and resolve a conflict, remains static, and the character as a result too neutral and indeterminate, this is the result of writing better in conveying the parts than the whole.

PENELOPE HOUSTON.



"Queen Christina"

EDITING

Karel Reisz

HOW MUCH CAN THE editor really do for the actor?

On the negative side, undoubtedly a great deal: a bad performance can be made to appear quite reasonable by simply taking the right precautions. The editor can discard the bad moments in the actor's performance, cut to reaction shots of somebody else when the actor is not at his best, play the most striking moments of the drama solely on the actor, whether he is speaking or not; he may even cut to inserts—a gun in a drawer, a baby smiling prettily in a pram, an old wedding photograph, that sort of thing—and hope that some of the emotion aroused by them will rub off on to the close-up of the actor which immediately follows them. All this, legitimate enough when done for a dramatic reason, is, of course, badly abused in every commercial film using an expensive star. But, assuming there is a star worthy of the treatment, this sort of editing can be developed into a fine art.

Re-viewing a few weeks ago, Garbo's *Queen Christina*, I was struck by the unflagging singleness of purpose of the editing. The film is Garbo, nothing more, nothing less. Make another actress recline on a couch and slowly, grape by grape, eat a whole bunch (which is nearly what Garbo does) and the audience will walk out. From the editor's point of view the film presents, in effect, only one problem: how to keep Garbo on the screen at all times and always from the most becoming angle available. A scene may start at a distance. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the editor will ease in, making a series of smooth-flowing transitions always to a larger and more flattering image. There is no attempt to make the cutting underline the drama. If the camera position is changed, it is because the next shot shows Garbo herself to better advantage than did the one before.

These thoughts are prompted by the recent experience of seeing two post-war Russian films which, for different reasons, commit a similar editorial heresy (speaking purely academically that is: with Garbo the technique produces wonderful results). *The Battle of Stalingrad* develops in two separate streams of action. There are the battle scenes (edited, incidentally, in such a way that one is never quite sure whose side one's sympathies are meant to lie with); and there are the reconstructions of political meetings which took place between the allied commanders during the recent war. These are staged like Madame Tussaud's *tableaux* with Churchill suitably disguised as an exhibit from the Chamber of Horrors. In the parts where Stalin is shown conferring with his generals, the scenes proceed something like this. We are in Stalin's study, a large ascetically furnished room containing tables

covered with maps of the battle-fields. The generals enter. Stalin, who is held in medium shot, asks then to give a report from the front or to produce plans for their future campaigns. All this is briefly established. Then, while the camera holds Stalin in medium shot, we hear, off-screen, long complex explanations from the generals. This done, Stalin is ready to reply (there is no need to cut to him, for the camera is already on him). Before doing so, he lights his pipe. The camera lovingly dwells on this and if, as usually happens, the pipe does not light first time, the camera, well-disciplined and patient, stays while the second match is lit. Possibly (for at this point he is in medium shot), the Generalissimo pauses dramatically, match in hand, points to a place on the map with the stem of his pipe and explains that the general's analysis, though heroic, is not the most cunning. Let us assume that at the next go, the tobacco actually does catch light. The Generalissimo inhales deeply and then (he is in medium shot at this point) begins a short and brilliant new analysis of the situation. Briefly we cut to the generals: they are clearly impressed.

An almost identical technique can be observed in Pudovkin's most recent film *Zhukovsky*—a biographical film of the pioneer in Soviet aeronautics. For a film with such obvious associations of movement and exciting visual action, the film is wordy and static. The continuity is constructed around the dicta of the great man, most of which, on this evidence, were rather long. There is no attempt to force the pace or to cut out any footage which might take a moment away from the hero: there is, also, no drama. *Zhukovsky*, the film sets out to say, was a great man, and proceeds to say so in every foot of its length. The camera is focussed on the actor and hardly ever leaves him. It is as if the ghost of the Lumière brothers were haunting the studio.

One's reaction to *Zhukovsky* is rather as if, on a visit to the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, while looking at a horsey picture, all smooth and shiny and photographically perfect, one suddenly discovered the name on the corner to be Matisse. That Pudovkin, the director who at one time preached more vehemently than anyone else the importance and virtues of the montage method, should suddenly surrender completely to the easy way out—making the actor do all the work and letting the camera merely watch—is a sobering thought indeed. But why has it happened? Why do so many post-war Russian films surrender all pretence at aesthetic seriousness and content themselves by merely plugging in long boring takes the virtues of a central hero. One cannot conceive that this sledge-hammer technique is really more effective, even as propaganda, than a more considered, dramatically impressive style. If the films of the later silent days in Russia were too 'formalistic', the films of to-day make exactly the opposite blunder: form has come to mean nothing to the Pudovkin of *Zhukovsky*: his film has come to be correspondingly less interesting and, therefore, one assumes less effective than, say, *Suvorov*. One comes away from it wishing for a little bit of the old formalism, for, as it stands, it is aesthetically not so much bad as entirely neutral. In making a film for primarily non-aesthetic reasons, Pudovkin has discarded all the forms of presentation which are aesthetically valid in the cinema. As a result, all the life has ebbed out of his film and it remains a dry piece of academicism. It is reminiscent of one of those black and white photographs in which an artless hack has seen fit to colour the lips red with a tiny brush.

THE DOCUMENTARY FILM AS AN ART FORM

A. Nicholas Vardac*

IT WOULD BE difficult to find the growth of a movement in the history of art to parallel that of the documentary film for its internal dissension, its violence and its bitterness. Even at a time when its impact is being felt throughout the field of the entertainment film, the turbulent cores of the movement ring with cries of heresy and treason as ferocious as plaudits at a bullfight—all in the name of truth. Truth has many servants. If the fundamental objective of any work of art is to reveal certain truths of human experience, all successfully artistic films must, in this way, be related to truth and, in this sense, are documentary. Does the documentary have to do with reality, i.e. objective reality? Or can truth be revealed without "realism"? If the documentary is specifically concerned with the direct representation of reality, can it be defended as an art form? If reality is the essence of the documentary what about films dealing with the past, or with the future? Is a Fitzpatrick Travelogue the true documentary? Would this rule out *Night Mail* or *Target for Tonight*, or Pare Lorentz's *The River* or the Robert Flaherty Films? Actually, how much truth can there be in a newsreel? Is truth stranger than fiction? And where does the work of Rossellini, or of De Sica, Billy Wilder, Elia Kazan, or Carol Reed fit in?

Without, for the moment, discussing these pictures or their producers, or introducing any of the many catch phrases that have been devised to describe the documentary film, why not start at the beginning? Before getting at the species documentary, what are the characteristics which set the genus film apart from the related arts? The documentary may thus find its own place, phrasing its own definition in terms of its material causes and clarifying its position as an art form.

Structure, the inevitable product of certain agents in action, is fundamental to the discussion or the teaching of any art form. Structure is, in many ways, characterized by the nature of its material causes, i.e. by the nature of the agents which bring it about. This can be no less true for the motion picture than for any of the literary arts, the musical or the static graphic arts. It is quite obvious that considerations valid in the organization of material into a dramatic plot intended for theatrical production do not always control the medium of the film. They are certainly not exclusively valid. The motion picture can be seen as an extension of the novel, the poem—lyric or epic—, of the short story, the play—comedy, tragedy, melodrama, or farce—, of the newspaper report or editorial, of the essay, or even, as some have claimed and demonstrated, of various musical structures. Such analogies are interesting and may often serve as useful points of departure or reference. But it would be foolish to believe that thereby the riddle of cinematic structure can be solved. The art of the screen is autonomous and was born with the ultimate recognition of its complete independence of the values of the stage or of certain related literary arts. The realization of a new aesthetic became manifest only with the emergence of those pioneer producers and directors who departed radically from theatrical tradition.

While the early American film master, D. W. Griffith, knew but one style of film production, larger potentials of the medium have since been revealed. The scope, the range, the

extreme stylistic flexibility of the cinema has since been demonstrated. But at the same time, this very virtue has boomeranged. The motion picture is not only the most flexible medium yet known to the arts, it is also the most illusive. The limitless artistic potential of the film defies formalization. But while its specific nature has yet to be fully demonstrated, certain basic distinguishing characteristics can easily be isolated. While, on the one hand, drama is concerned with man in action, cinema in its purest form can exist on motion alone, or, as we are accustomed, motion plus sound. And if the highest level of dramatic action is the result of man deliberating in order to arrive at a choice on moral grounds, cinema has often been most successful at the box-office in the absence of such action. This distinction, while it may, at first glance, seem nothing more than a paradox of terminology, is, if we look into the kinds of motion which are at present within the vocabulary of the film-maker, critical.

Motion in cinema has fallen into three general categories:

(1) Primary movement, or movement within the material being photographed.

(2) Secondary movement, or movement deriving from the mobility of the camera, its lenses, shutters and timing devices.

(3) Tertiary movement, or movement arising out of the editing or montage, i.e. filmic movement.

Since the secondary and tertiary movement are inevitably dependent upon the requirements of primary movement, the exact nature of this basic cinematic value and its implications must be clearly understood. While the dramatist may be limited primarily to human beings for his active dramatic agents, the filmwright, working in terms of photography, can utilize the entire range of natural and man-made activity. The camera can dissect and reveal the movement implicit within the full gamut of animate as well as inanimate phenomena. While structure in the drama has been defined as the product of character in action, cinematic structure must be the consequence of all forms of life—human, animal, plant or elemental—in action. The "mental" or life processes, the conscious or subconscious will of rivers, cloudbursts, storms, task forces, seas of grass or mountains of water, fires, floods, earthquakes, budding trees or colonizing ants can be broken down, dissected, through methods peculiar to the camera to reveal the inevitability of certain actions, from point of inception to that of objective manifestation. The "deus ex machina" of the stage become the legitimate dramatic agents of the screen. The choice of possible "cinematic" as opposed to dramatic agents has been freed of any limitation. Cinematic plot or structure can arise out of the conflict between any pair of the many ever-changing manifestations of life in the universe. The battle between soil and water gave birth to *The River*; that between certain tenderloin characters and a "free-willed" public health officer, *Panic in the Streets*; that between the Royal Mail and the English countryside brought about *Night Mail*; the clash between two socio-political groups, both militant, created *Open City*. The full implication of this fact upon cinematic structure is continually being enlarged. There is something which the material of

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Robert Flaherty, Paul Rotha, Basil Wright, Grierson, Harry Watt, David Lean, Carol Reed, Roberto Rossellini and Vittorio De Sica has in common and which is more fundamental than the handling of the camera or the film strip.

With the unlimited choice of possible agents it becomes the specific nature of the agents chosen which serves to qualify the structure. Without, for the present, considering secondary or tertiary movement, or exploring the philosophy of these film-makers, the consideration of primary movement has an immediate bearing upon our understanding of the "documentary" concept. In the stimulating article dealing with "Robert Flaherty and the Naturalistic Documentary" which appeared in the Fall issue of *The Hollywood Quarterly*, Hugh Gray suggests that a documentary film "is basically a non-studio or non-theatrical film of any kind, other than a cartoon or abstract film". Elsewhere we hear of the documentary film as "the creative treatment of actuality",¹ John Howard Lawson speaks of the documentary as distinct from the story film² as if there is no causal sequence in actuality. While such definitions may serve to describe certain aspects of the documentary film today, they fail to consider the fundamental and material causes which can give rise to such an artistic product. Hugh Gray later defends the necessity of "a theme and a dramatic unity",³ but forgets to discuss the nature of the agents which can bring about such structural values of the species documentary.

The entire range of agents available to the film-maker can be arbitrarily divided into two groups: (1) those whose actions are largely dependent and predictable, and (2) those whose actions are the result of independent decisions and thereby unpredictable. The material cause of any cinematic production naturally falls into either one of these two groups. The so-called documentary has been primarily concerned with agents drawn from the first of these groups. This is not to say that the documentary is plotted or structuralized exclusive of the actions of human agents. It is simply to draw attention to the nature of the forces which motivate the structure of contemporary documentary production. Human beings in the form of social, economic, religious or political groups, or individuals whose actions are not deliberative, independent and unpredictable possess the same attributes in their function as dramatic or cinematic agents as any other animate object within the realm of nature. They present forces which can naturally come into conflict and give rise to a structure, but whose behaviour or action pattern is not fluid, flexible and subject to change in an unpredictable manner with the making of fresh discoveries.

This is highly indicative for it becomes the exact point at which measurable fact ends and fiction begins. Given a wilful human being who is capable of making discoveries about his physical environment, his fellows and, most of all, about himself and who is, at the same time, capable of thought or deliberation, such a character will engage in deliberation because he recognizes the possibility of a choice of action. There is no need for him to act in a fixed or determined way. His actions will be the result of a fresh reorganization of all the knowledge, new and old, in an individual, and hence unpredictable, manner. Such a character would himself be unaware of the direction his action will finally take prior to his choice, otherwise thought or deliberation would be unnecessary. That such originality should have probability and be acceptable to an audience is the problem of the fiction film-writer, for the fiction lies in the existence of such an agent.

The documentary film, on the other hand, cannot possibly

deal with agents individualized on the level of deliberation. This point may become clearer if we examine the process of dramatic characterization a little closer. Characterization in the film as in the drama lies in the process of individualization. The playwright or filmwright can individualize, differentiate his human agents in a number of ways of which deliberation is only one. On its lowest level characterization is achieved on a simple biological or physical basis. Sex, age, size, physique stature, posture, coloration, every aspect of visual appearance including dress and carriage, serves to distinguish one character from another, hence to create character. For the purposes of art, appearances often make the man: similarly association. Birds of a feather flock together. Thus on a second level we find that characterizing action can be achieved in terms of the attitude of an agent's social, economic, religious or political affiliations. Moving beyond this we find that, while these two lower levels have to do primarily with conditions of fact in the immediate present, and hence are measurable and predictable, a human agent must also be the product of his entire past. We are all of us the result of a long course of psychic conditioning which, combined with our original creates a *bent*, or a *disposition*, a manner of acting dependent upon past experience and fixed at any one point. Action at this level can either be reflexive or the result of habit. In either case it is predictable. It is further apparent that such a character may postpone action even under the continuous pressure of a specific stimulus until a particular desire has been consciously formulated. Action again may be either reflexive or habitual without further conscious consideration or it may lead to deliberation.⁴ It can be seen that, given the facts, all action that is honestly below the level of deliberation is predictable. Once deliberation enters the picture the consequences in terms of action cannot be foreseen. The character can see the possibility of choice. Predictable, or documentary characterization precludes the existence of free will, of choice in human actions.

It may be interesting to note in passing, that in 1925 with the feature film in its ascendant, the behaviourists led by John Watson⁵ decried the existence of consciousness and will. Instinct becomes acquired behaviour and thought is merely talking to ourselves. To Watson, as to William James⁶ and the pragmatists, thought is automatic and the responsibility for one's actions disappears. Freud, too, devising his system of psycho-analysis on the belief that the course of mental processes is automatically regulated by the pleasure principle, denies conscious will. Reason is merely the servant of an emotional-mechanical process, and man, a complex of learned behaviour, is powerless to contradict his environment. The prevalence of this deterministic philosophy might explain much of the characterization in films today. Would it also explain the current rush towards documentary treatment?

This analysis carries interesting implications, eliminating the conscious will as an independent force and thereby discounting the concept of the freedom of choice, the action of human agents is always predictable, the camera, with its ability to dissect and reveal complex human motivations, can measure and fix its human agents. It can easily break them down, exclusive of free will, into predictable forces, into facts. Cinema, then, is not obliged to hypothecate in terms of its human agents. We are led to the inevitable conclusion that if the concept of art as an imitation of life is to apply to cinema, there are serious obstacles in the way of defending the documentary as an art form on the basis of primary movement.

¹ John Grierson, quoted by Edgar Anstey "Development of Film Technique in Britain", p.242 in *Experiment in the Film*, London, 1948.

² *Theory and Technique of Playwriting and Screenwriting*, Putnam, N.Y. 1949, p.363.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ (This analysis derived from the breakdown offered by Hubert C. Heffner in a paper entitled *Character in the Drama* presented at a Humanities Symposium, Palo Alto, 1947, sponsored by Viking Foundation.)

⁵ *Behaviorism*, N.Y., 1925.

⁶ *Does Consciousness Exist?*, 1904.

Documentary producers are nevertheless particular about preserving the non-deliberative quality of their human agents. Even Rossellini, always careful to destroy the actor as a conscious wilful agent, is particular about the handling of deliberation and choice. In *Open City*, for instance, where there is a danger that Marina Mari, the mistress of the underground leader, may make a wilful deliberate choice, Rossellini is careful to have this decision made under the influence of dope. If such a decision were made consciously, she would immediately become a villain, the piece would fall into melodrama and, hence, fiction. Similarly the Nazi agents are motivated on the second level, that of classification or affiliation. Again, if their actions were the result of deliberation leading to specific choice, the piece would surely become a contest between the good and the bad, heroes and villains. As it is, both sides are caught in the maelstrom of events; both act in full integrity and without attempt at intellectual or moral justification, in agreement with their political and national classification. These characters exist beyond the limits of the script. They are non-fictional characters. A question immediately arises. If art as imitation does not occur in the characterization, and hence in the structure, how can the field of the documentary be defended as an art?

Secondary movement, arising from the mobility of the camera, the manipulation of its lenses, shutters, etc., carries interesting possibilities. You are familiar with the argument which claims that the motion picture camera cannot possibly present a true document of an actual event. The camera in the hands of a human is bound to provide a comment upon, an interpretation of, the material being photographed. The simple presence of a four-sided frame immediately implies a comment. The angle chosen, the distance from the object, whether in close-up, distant or composite shot, the movement of the camera, etc., all provide their own particular warning of the event. With the liberation of the camera movement and the availability of a wide range of lenses, it becomes ever more impossible to provide full accuracy in reporting fact—or so the argument runs. Naturally the camera, by virtue of its lenses, shutters and particularly its mobility, can see things in a manner beyond the ability of our normal range of vision. In addition to its capacity for the cold, impersonal, detached view, it can also reorganize space. With its aptitude for “distortion, enlargement and magnification”, oftentimes only the motion picture camera can find the true meaning of objective values. It is through its ability to “lie” that the motion picture camera derives its potential for truth. As Robert Flaherty has put it, “One often has to distort a thing in order to catch its true spirit”.⁷ The camera, then, through its ability to organize the photography of an object in the spacial sense, is not obliged to falsify, but can thereby reveal greater truths. Photography, alone and without regard for the true meaning, the inherent essence of the object, results in affectation. Thus, paradoxically, through its ability to lie, the camera makes its real contribution to the creation of truth in the documentary.

Incidentally, if the camera made such a contribution simply on the basis of its capacity as a recording agent, there would be small basis for discussion of the documentary film as an art form or of the cinema itself as an autonomous art. It is of fundamental importance to the support of documentary as art that the camera does not record truth but discovers it. Through its imitation of the object, a greater truth is revealed.

In the third type of movement, filmic movement, we see that, while the primary purpose in the use of the camera has

been the new and revealing organization of space, it is possible, through the manipulation of the various film strips which comprise the whole, to reorganize time. Again such control of the chronological sequence between cause and effect can impart a flow and an emphasis unregistered by the normal eye or by the normal time sense. The cut is not simply “a convenient substitute for theatrical scene shifting”,⁸ but has at last provided the creative artist a means for revealing the true relativity of various actions even as they are actually transpiring. This disruption of normal time sequence, which at first glance appears to throw the entire subject of filmic art into the realm of contrivance, actually provides the strongest method yet known to the arts for revealing true relationships. Through the use of the cut hitherto hidden values can be disclosed. An additive series of film strips is equal to more or less than the sum of its parts, but rarely ever equal to the exact sum. And these new truths can be projected with an added emotional impact through the rhythmic control of the entire assembly, again made possible by the cut. Thus filmic movement is not achieved through a limitation of truth, but is actually achieved only as new truths are expressed.

From this it can be concluded that :

- (1) A documentary film structure can arise only from the conflicting actions of those agents taken from the entire range of natural or man-made activity which are not capable of deliberation and choice. Documentary ends where free-will and choice begin.
- (2) The documentary film depends for its existence as an art form upon secondary and tertiary movement. These two forms of motion picture movement revealing new truths through their reorganization of space and time, alone provide claim for the documentary as an art form.

These conclusions provide nothing new. They have been derived from the record. They may help to sharpen our critical evaluation of the product in the field of the documentary and to explain why, despite our great technical facility, producers have failed to achieve an artistic success in the documentary story film comparable to the work of certain foreign producers. Considerations within the concept of primary movement are as important as values arising from secondary and tertiary movement. Artistic success in any medium depends upon a stylistic congruity between the requirements of the material and the treatment employed, between form and matter.

Artistic and commercial developments since the end of the war would indicate that we have apparently arrived at the end of an era in cinema. New audiences for the film are developing throughout the world and, by their needs, a new species of film is in the making. To judge from the record at home, American artists, producers and exhibitors are fully aware of the flowering of creative skill in film-making which has taken place in European film centres. A threshold has been formed and some have already entered. Our domination of world markets from 1918 to the present will withstand these challenges, indeed, it *must* withstand these challenges if we are not to lose our primary weapon in the battle of political ideologies. In the struggle for common institutions and actions with which to unite, the Western community cannot overlook the focal point provided by the film and its limitless audience. In the process we, too, will move forward for there will be a growth in our artistic skill, our economic management and our political vision.

⁷ Gray, Hugh, “Robert Flaherty and Naturalistic Documentary” *Hollywood Quarterly*, V, 1, Autumn, 1950, p. 43.

⁸ R. B. Taylor, “Robert Flaherty, A Profile”, *New Yorker*, June, 1949.

⁹ Spottiswoode, Raymond, *A Grammar of the Film* (Berkeley, 1950) p. 201.

DE SICA'S NEW FILM

Antonio Petrucci

VITTORIO DE SICA began his career as a stage actor: the first film in which he appeared was produced as far back as 1932. It could hardly be called a good picture, although its director, Amleto Palermi, was a very talented man with a craftsmanship possessed by few others at that time. The film was cheaply made, not even shot in a studio but in a cinema—the Barberini in Rome—where, a few weeks ago, *Miracolo a Milano* was previewed. Palermi's film had, despite all its failings, one signal quality; it brought new actors to the screen with rare insight and sympathy. In the same year (and I must stress the coincidence), Palermi had made another film that, for a proper understanding of the Italian cinema, should not be overlooked. This was *La Vecchia Signora*, played by one of our greatest actresses, Emma Gramatica. She, too, was then new to the cinema. There are qualities in *La Vecchia Signora* which De Sica the director has not forgotten: above all, a special atmosphere, and the way in which Palermi focused his attention on the goodness of the poor and humble, even though hidden behind genial ruggedness and simply, even comically, expressed. By exploring this mine, the ore of which was discovered so many years ago, De Sica has attained his present position with *Bicycle Thieves* and *Miracolo a Milano*. I stress this partly because I was at the time the youngest of Palermi's assistants, and also because foreign readers may forget that "neo-realism" did not blossom suddenly, like the flower of the agave, in the dark night of war.

If, in fact, the Italian neo-realistic cinema has found in the directors of *Open City*, *Paiza*, *Bicycle Thieves* and *Miracolo a Milano* its most outstanding representatives, it has also reached a stage—with, to quote only our two most important directors, De Sica's *Miracolo a Milano* and Rossellini's *Francesco*—at which it has to leave behind the qualities that remind superficial observers of French literary realism in the 19th century: it has to move forward to seek a true answer to the questions which these films have imposed on the collective sensibility.

Rosellini tried to approach *Francesco* not, as some have thought, by a lyrical evasion of reality, but by re-stating lyrically (even though with only partial success) the example of the most humble of the great Italian saints, who found his faith in love and charity. De Sica, however, has sought in *Miracolo a Milano* to tackle the difficult problem of a fable of everyday life. He has come, with some bitterness, to the conclusion that it is impossible to find true love in this world and real understanding among men. After the private show, De Sica himself said that it is a desperate film—if you consider desperate, I add, the position of one who believes in original sin and its consequences, and thus that Paradise exists in heaven and not here below. The film, in fact, ends with a real flight to heaven by the poor and forlorn (which means, the good), while the others remain in this world fighting for possessions which will only bring them more wretchedness and sorrow.

De Sica and Cesare Zavattini (author of the story, and of the screenplay taken from his novel, *Toto il buono*), have not

stated and resolved the social problem of rich and poor on social or, still less, on political grounds; they have sought a solution through fable, through an escape towards the supernatural. One point must be clarified. This is far from being a religious film, even if its substance is in some degree religious. Some Christian principles, however, have so thoroughly (even if unconsciously) entered the conscience of its makers that one is hardly surprised when a man like Zavattini, certainly not religious by nature, testifies to their influence. For this reason I was reminded, when seeing *Miracolo a Milano*, of G. K. Chesterton on the value of fables. The importance and originality of De Sica's new film lies in the great formal difficulty of combining fantastic and realistic elements, of making the fabulous real, and the real, fairy-like.

The first part of the film, fabulous in incident but realistic in style, is in my opinion the best. It attains a poetry rarely achieved in the cinema. The second part is somewhat marred by excess of detail, though it is rich in overt and implied meaning. This is not, however, the right place to begin a detailed review of the film: English audiences have not yet seen it, and the effectiveness of criticism, I believe, is subject to the readers' knowledge of the work discussed.

But I feel that among recent Italian films this is one which English audiences will certainly like and appreciate. The plot, as of all Zavattini's stories, is very simple: it is the story of Toto, born under a cauliflower, who after leaving an orphanage settles in the suburbs of Milan, in a village composed of funny little huts set up by the poor on private ground not yet exploited for building. Toto, with his simple-minded and really fairy-tale goodness, is the centre and soul of the village. One day, oil is discovered in the district, and of course the new owner of the land wants to drive out the poor. In the midst of their dramatic struggle to defend their homes, the old lady who found and adopted Toto as a baby comes down from heaven and gives him a dove which, simply by being held in his hand, can work miracles. Now all the wishes of the village come true: Toto sends the invaders away and sets to work to fulfil all the simple, childish desires of his friends. All of them, or almost all, ask for useless things, small superfluous things that, through novelty, bring joy to the life of the humble.

But the power of the dove works only for a time. After a dreamlike night, the invaders return next morning and carry off the poor people with all their new, miraculously acquired possessions. The old lady, however, comes back from heaven and gives Toto his dove again: the police cars in which the poor are being taken away fall to pieces just in front of Milan cathedral. The poor are free and happy again. It is early morning, and the street-cleaners are sweeping the big square. Toto takes a broom from one of them, and carrying with him the pure and simple girl whom he loves, settles on the broomstick and invites his friends to follow him. At first they hesitate, then decide to follow their hero on brooms; they soar above the cathedral, above the city roofs, among the



clouds, up into the air, until they disappear into the serenity of a better and happier kingdom than this sad world of ours.

The beauty of certain scenes must be mentioned—the pure and passionate love-making of Toto to his young girl, the perfect sequence of the funeral of Toto's foster-mother, the enchanted atmosphere of the village during the miracle season. One should mention, too, Aldo's fine photography, Cicognini's music, De Sica's skilful direction of his two young leading players; but the film will be fully and more adequately reviewed when it reaches London. Here I have only tried to give some idea of *Miracolo a Milano* to English readers, who have shown such an alert and sympathetic interest in the recent Italian cinema.

"*Miracolo a Milano*." The paupers' village: above left, Francesco Golisano as Toto



The Seventh Art



"... But we have a motto for these troubled times—'Let's Go to The Pictures'." (Richard Todd, in a speech at Daily Mail Film Festival.)



DREAMLAND THEATRE, LOS ANGELES . . . a Chinese language feature.

In a small township where is behind a forest, and surrounded by a beach in the front. A township girl picking up clams in the beach, she meet a rich young widower who is touring around. She is hardly to be acquainted with this widower, but through the hotel owner who was old friend of her grandmother introduce the widower to her.

The girl, after her mother committed suicide, has tried to sell herself obtain money for bury her mother. Her friend, the widower has heard about such tragedy, hurry to marry her and promise to support her feeble father and a younger sister.

NOTICE: In Dreamland Theatre, every Tuesday has Chinese Feature. (Cinema Advertisement.)



ORPHEUS—Academy—has Jean Marais and Maria Casarès in a breath-taking thriller. ("Picture Preview" in *Bristol Evening World*.)

It was with great pleasure that I received the dainty apron, worn by Rosalind Russell in *A Woman of Distinction*, also the picture taken from the film, showing Miss Russell actually wearing the apron. I was very proud and excited when I opened the parcel, because I must admit I was a wee bit sceptical as to whether these articles really were worn by stars. I have no doubt now. It is a thrilling thing to possess something one's favourite film stars have actually worn. ("Letter from Delighted Prizewinner" in *Picture Show* competition.)



Ida Lupino is to make a film about the "second Dillinger", William Cook, who was hunted down in the desert after killing six people. Title: *I Talked to God*. (*Daily Express*.)



Jean Griffin . . . wants pen-friend anywhere in Great Britain. Interests: music, letter-writing, films, Tyrone Power, Cornel Wilde. (Advertisement in *Picture Show*.)

An American in Paris



A new musical of exceptional promise is *An American in Paris*, a colour extravaganza derived from Gershwin's music. The players and dancers are Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron (seen in the full-page still opposite this page), formerly with the Ballet des Champs-Élysées and brought by Kelly to Hollywood: others in the cast are Nina Foch and Oscar Levant, seen in the left-hand still below. Above, Kelly in a dance number: below, right, an American in Paris. The film is directed by Vincente Minnelli, and the choreography, including a quarter hour ballet, is by Gene Kelly. The designs are by Cedric Gibbons and Jack Martin Smith, who have previously worked with Minnelli and Kelly on *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *The Pirate*, and *On the Town*.







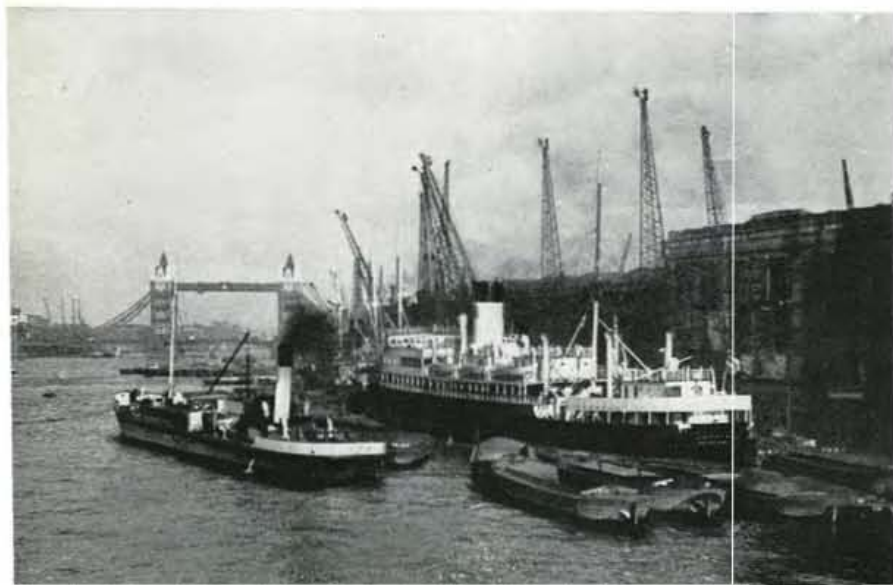
1951

A number of notable new British films will be widely shown during the period of the Festival of Britain. Of particular interest in the documentary field is Basil Wright's *Waters of Time*, which has been described as a personal impression of the lower reaches of the Thames, and the artery of world traffic and trade which is the Port of London.

Waters of Time is Basil Wright's first major film for several years. The director of *Windmill in Barbados*, *Song of Ceylon*, *Children at School*, has since 1946 confined himself mainly to producing and writing. His new film, presented by the Port of London Authority to the Festival of Britain, is produced for International Realist, the company he founded in 1947. Basil Wright has written, directed and edited it in collaboration with Bill Launder; the photography is by Reg Hughes, the music by Alan Rawsthorne, and the spoken text written by Paul Dehn.



*Waters
of
Time*



An American Tragedy

LAMENT IN FILM TITLES

It happened one night—holiday in Havana,
Mr. Ashton
. . . was indiscreet.

Chorus

Every girl should be married.

The set up? Love from a stranger,
Big town after dark.
Out of the blue the thin man—
Easy to look at, the gaunt stranger
. . . . Alias a gentleman,
The man who played God.

Saxon charm, temptation
A kiss in the dark . . . the lost moment

This man is mine! My man Godfrey.
The hasty heart
One night of love—night in Paradise
. . . I surrender dear.

The sun comes up, there's always another dawn.
The unsuspected "farewell my lovely"
The unfaithful—a woman betrayed
. . . Ah wilderness.

Chorus

Thy soul shall bear witness.

"I shall return"!—the cardboard cavalier;
The last laugh.
"Hail the conquering hero"!—so evil my love
. . . I walk alone.

Out of the past I remember Mama,
The green hills of Wyoming, life with father,
The best years of our lives.
The good earth.

Our vines have tender grapes—tap roots
To the ends of the earth.
For them that trespass—the invisible wall.
The fallen idol
The exile
. . . they won't forget.

Alone
The fugitive
Night unto night; will tomorrow never come?

Escape?
. . . You can't escape for ever.
Kentucky, San Francisco, docks of New Orleans,
the edge of the world.
The crimson circle.

Chorus

Dear Murderer, this was a woman.

It's a wonderful life!—Hi Gang! Are you with it
Love honour and goodbye!
Time out of mind laughing lady.

Walk a crooked mile,
the twisted road

The shop at sly corner.
Margie, Mary Lou, Dracula's daughter, Nora Prentiss:
Fast and furious, gold diggers of Broadway.
Always together; pick up girls,
the good companions—deadlier than the male.

They've got me covered
. . . this time for keeps.

Chorus

Journey into fear, dancing lady; dangerous venture.

I'm no angel—the main street kid
Millions like us
Street women—the dough girls.
"Here comes Mr. Jordan, a guy named Joe".
The first gentleman: Great expectations.
The challenge. "Going my way"?
. . . Sorry wrong number.
"Hi fella." "Hi stranger".
"Oh, you beautiful doll"!

Chorus

The guilty, the hunted, the trespasser.

No sad songs for me—the damned don't cry.

"Meet me at dawn, the house on 52nd street,
The street with no name
Walk softly stranger, follow me quietly".
Stairway to heaven . . . doorway to hell . . .
A girl must live.

A thousand and one nights, whisky galore
We're in the money.

Chorus

Poor little rich girl,
You gotta stay happy,
Sleep my love, love and learn to have
. . . and have not.

The very thought of you—the strange woman
The accused, the frightened lady,
Angel in exile.

Epilogue

It happens every spring,
Don't trust strangers.
The awful truth: Believe me
Flesh will surrender.
. . . that's a good girl.

LIONEL TRAINER

TELEVISION

FOR A CRITIC in a monthly magazine to keep pace with contemporary film production is sometimes difficult enough; to keep pace with television is quite impossible. Each month as I begin this review I am depressed by the knowledge that what I say about even the most recent programme (which already belongs to the past) will not be read (such are the mechanics of magazine production) until some six weeks later. In this position one is forced to write not so much in terms of particular programmes as of underlying principles, hoping all the time that they will not have too much of the vagueness of generalisation, or the gloom of a post-mortem.

This month I should like to dwell briefly on some considerations of the relationship between television and broadcasting arising out of the programme *We beg to Differ*, which has just finished its first television series as I write. Television draws its personnel, and much of its material and technique, from three main fields: broadcasting, the film and the theatre. And since the television service is by historic accident part of the B.B.C. the pull of Broadcasting House, and of people with broadcasting experience, is likely to be fairly strong. Sometimes, as in the case of Richard Dimbleby, one finds a broadcaster quickly mastering the new medium with brilliant success. But whether people whose experience has been exclusively confined to broadcasting are *in general* likely to be of the greatest benefit to television, or whether many broadcasting ideas can be transplanted to it, is another matter.

We Beg to Differ, in which such personalities as Joyce Grenfell, Gladys Young, Gilbert Harding, John Clements and Kay Hammond (the last two replaced in television by Bernard Braden and Barbara Kelly), under the chairmanship of Roy Plomley, are provoked to an exchange of views by listeners' questions, has apparently been quite a successful broadcast programme, and was nearly always entertaining to listen to. On television it had a somewhat sticky start, and despite certain later modifications (and despite the fact, let me add, that it was infinitely more rewarding than the Dolores Gray films, or *Charivari*, or some of the other near-rubbish thrown on to our screens—but no longer on to mine) it has never quite settled down. Why is this? *In the News*, which is superficially much the same sort of thing—an exchange of views between four political speakers under their chairman—is one of the highlights of television when its regular team is in session. Why should one such programme falter where the other succeeds?

For one thing, the speakers in *In the News* have always shown a sureness and a sense of ease which Roy Plomley's team on television have lacked. In their first programmes the latter were seated somewhat austere at a large horseshoe-type company directors' table, men (two) on one side and women (four) on the other. Not only did the camera display a certain restlessness in trying to move from one speaker to the other (more numerous, further apart and often much briefer in statement than their colleagues of *In the News*), but the speakers themselves seemed restless and unhappy. All the time they appeared uncertain whether to look at the camera or at the chairman, and made the fatal compromise of looking first at one and then at the other, like caged animals searching for the way out; this was so general as to suggest that the producer, ignorant of a principle discovered by film makers certainly as far back as 1904, was failing to give the right guidance.

By the second programme experiments were being made in reseating, at least to the extent of mixing men and women; in the last two programmes of the series, the boardroom was abandoned for a drawing-room, which was certainly an improvement, and two members of the public were introduced in the persons of John Moore and Mrs. Corbett. The lesson of

ignoring the camera seemed to have been learned, but the seating arrangements appeared still rather stark and studied, with men on one side and women on the other, and the idea of a chairman did not altogether suit the after-dinner atmosphere of armchairs and coffee cups.

It was, I think, unfortunate that these fumbling experiments in presentation had to be made in public, and they suggested an unfortunate absence of forethought and planning. No one appeared to have decided, in particular, whether *We Beg to Differ* was a debate or a conversation piece, and the question was still an open one when the series closed. In sound, the question may have been unimportant, but television is more exacting.

The weakness of the programme seemed to me, however, to depend on something far more fundamental than mistakes in presentation. The speakers of *In the News* hold one's interest because they are knowledgeable, because they are discussing topics of current importance vital to us all, and because they are so passionately interested in the argument that their discussion is full and animated (they have little time for the camera once they get going). It would be absurd to suggest that *We Beg to Differ* should imitate these virtues, but it could cultivate its own. Its contributors are not expected to be experts in politics, or in any other subject, but one may expect them to be experts in lively conversation. Above all, its questions, or the way in which they are treated, should be more serious.

By "serious" here, I do not mean heavy or gloomy; heaven forbid! I mean that the questions should be treated with more respect by the team. So far they have taken their job in a far too casual and cavalier fashion, at least for television. Occasionally a question has had sufficient significance to arouse their interest (for example, whether tipping is desirable, especially to workpeople receiving reasonable wages), but too often trivial questions (for example, whether women are more ill-mannered than men) are either treated desultorily or dismissed contemptuously as inane generalisations. So they may well be, but if listeners have taken the trouble to respond to the invitation to send a question in, and if these questions have been pre-selected by the producer or chairman, it ill behoves the team to shrug them contemptuously away; they are paid not for this, but to treat them all, sensible and silly, as shuttlecocks for entertaining conversation, and if they cannot do this they fail to justify themselves. This is what I mean in saying that the questions should more often either be serious, or, if light, should be treated more seriously (i.e. with more respect); and in the latter case, it might perhaps help matters if the chairman did not worry too much about keeping the team "to the point of the question".

This last point really brings one to the crux of the matter. To a programme on sound radio, one can listen with half an ear and often does. Occupied with one's knitting or newspaper or fretwork, one catches the highspots, and does not worry overmuch about the longueurs. With television, however, this kind of half-attention is hardly possible. One looks all the time with both eyes and listens with both ears, and in order to justify this completeness of attention a programme has to have some substance. The weakness of *We Beg to Differ* was that its questions were too trivial, and they were treated in too casual a manner by people who had *ad-libbed* their way successfully on the loudspeaker and hoped it might be possible to do the same on the screen. The attitude of mind behind this was, I am sure, responsible for all the other faults of happy-go-lucky experimental presentation which went with it.

All this leads me to believe that very few broadcasting ideas are likely to find their way to television, at least without radical modification, and that broadcasting people, paradoxically it may seem, have more to learn about the new medium than those who have been trained in the tougher schools of film and theatre. The visual aspect of things is often more

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